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HISTORY OF EUROPE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE TRIUMPHS AND STRUGGLES THAT SHAPED A CONTINENT

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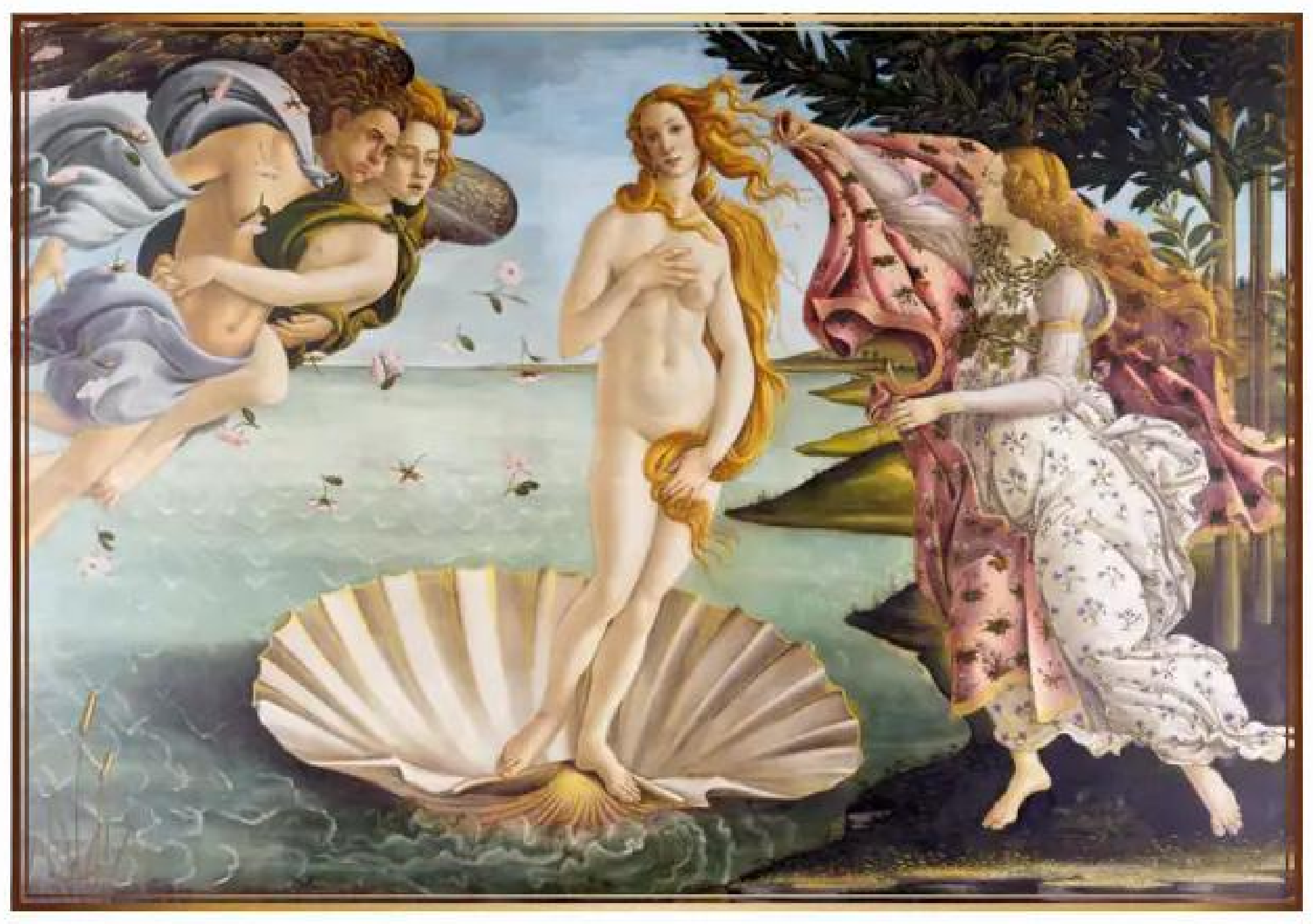

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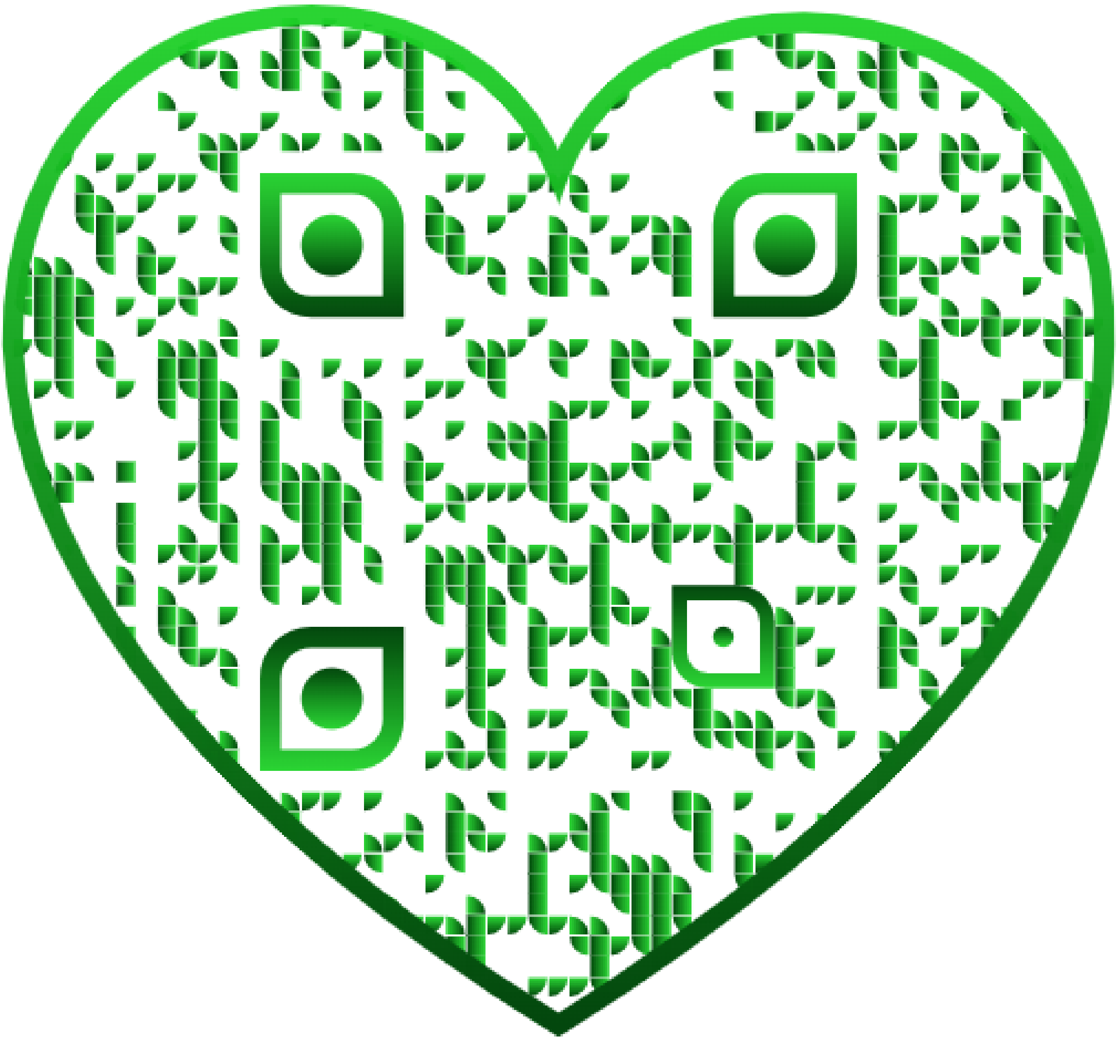

WELCOME

For thousands of years, Europe has witnessed some of the most defining moments in history. Classical antiquity laid down the foundations of modern democracy in Athens. Intellectual and cultural movements introduced new ways of thinking. Exciting scientific innovations changed the way we live. Religious upheaval, bloody revolutions and devastating wars plunged the continent into chaos and at times, brought it to its knees. All of this and more have combined to form the rich tapestry of Europe's fascinating yet complicated past.

In *History of Europe*, we embark on a journey to unravel the extraordinary events, ideas and figures that have shaped modern Europe into what it is today.

Images: Getty Images

HISTORY OF
EUROPE

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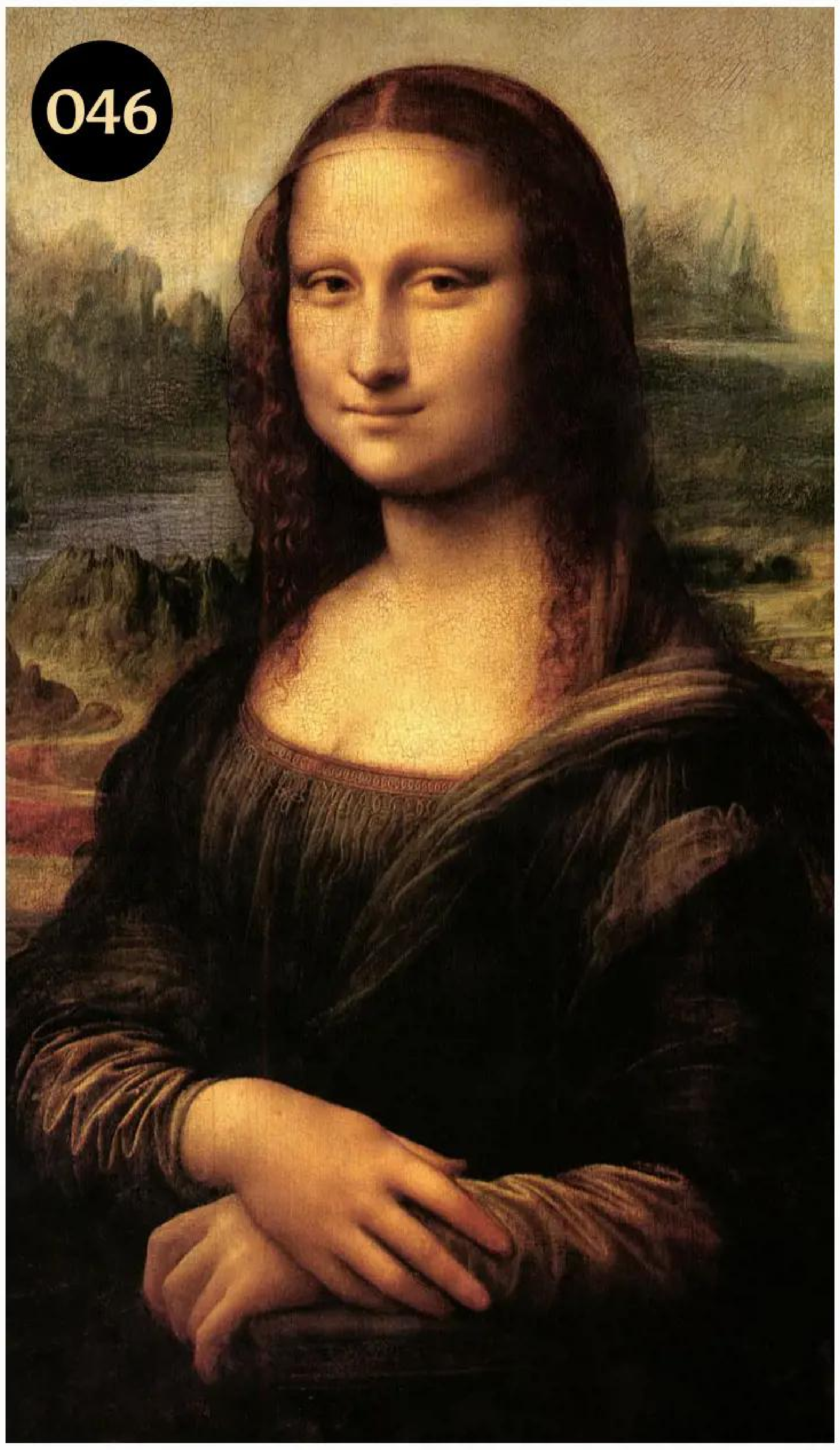

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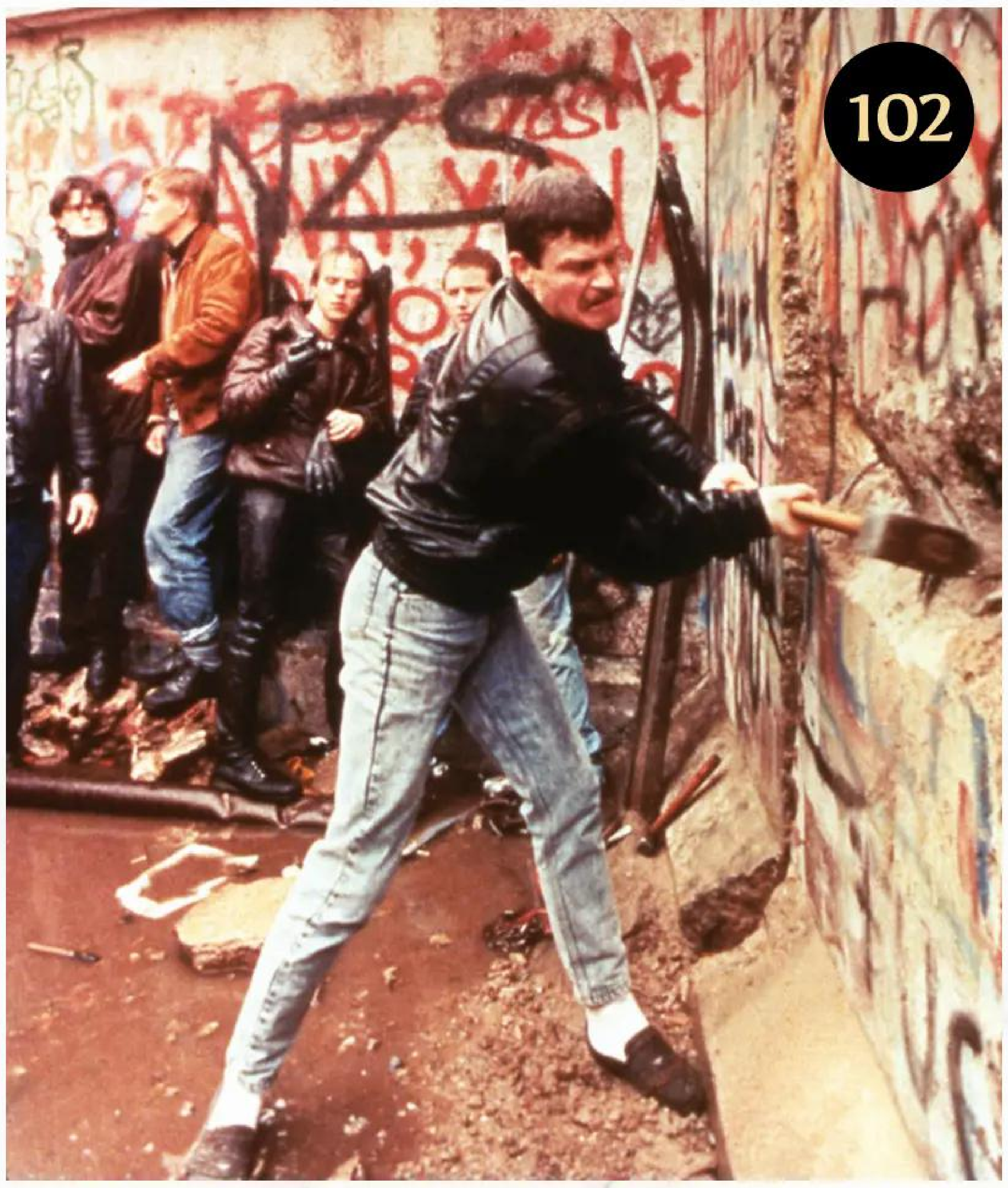

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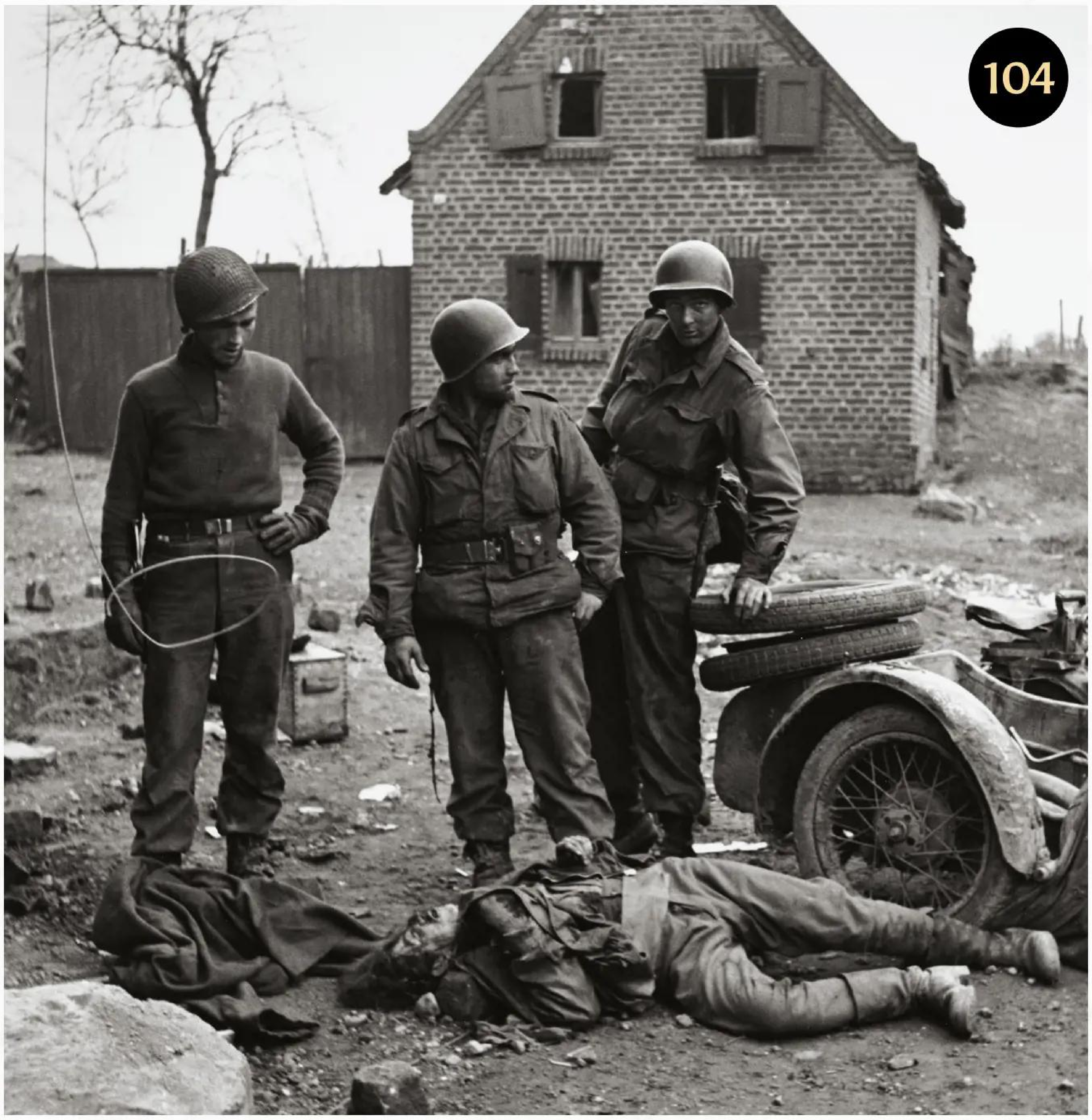


c.3000 BCE-c.500 BCE

THE BRONZE AGE

Although prehistoric, Bronze Age Europe experienced something close to a pre-modern globalisation

Written by Mark Dolan

The concept of the Bronze Age was invented in Denmark in 1817 by CJ Thomsen, as part of his 'Three-Age System'. An archaeologist and museum curator. Thomsen, with access to a vast range of prehistoric artefacts, created a chronology of prehistoric Europe based on the development of tools, from stone to bronze and finally, iron. Thomsen's ideas, published in his 1836 book, *Ledetraad til Nordisk Oldkyndighed* (Guidelines on Nordic Antiquarianism), and later translated into German and English, have remained influential, and have provided the broad structure of the Bronze Age as it is known today, even if the details have developed as to be almost unrecognisable.

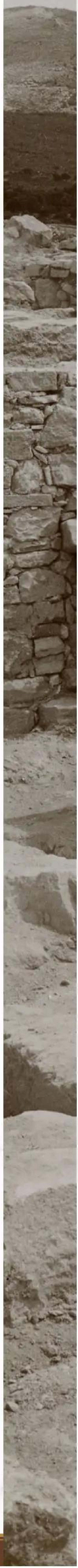
Around 3000 BCE, the Bronze Age began, somewhere in Mesopotamia, following the lead of the Neolithic (the New Stone Age, when groups of people began to settle in one place and invent farming rather than being nomadic), which had its genesis in the same region some 7,000 years earlier. Lasting around 2,500 years, the European Bronze Age saw huge changes to life across the continent's regions, with different cultures rising, spreading and falling, and the growth of trade between groups and advancements made in every sphere of life. The period gets its name from the tools that were made and used across Europe, with bronze, an alloy of copper with tin (or, in some cases, other metals such as arsenic) becoming the most popular material for new objects. However, arguably the more significant development that occurred in the 2,000 or so years before iron burst onto the scene (initially as the new vogue material for showy jewellery) was the interconnectedness of vast areas of the northern hemisphere.

People had been buried with gold jewellery for 3,000 years before the Bronze Age

Although it was the growth of trade routes, movement of people, ideas and things that characterised the Bronze Age, it was far from a blanket culture that spread across the continent. From its beginnings in the Ancient Near East, the use of bronze took around a thousand years to find its way across to Scandinavia, via islands such as Cyprus and Crete, through continental Europe, and into the colder climes of the UK and the Low Countries. Unsurprisingly, as a period that spanned hundreds of years and vast distances, the Bronze Age was far from a single common cultural event. Prior to the advent of bronze, different regions had developed independently, and the cultures that existed continued to grow in different ways, impacted by the introduction of bronze, and other new ideas, in very different ways.

It is not possible here to cover the entirety of the Bronze Age (hundreds of academics dedicate their entire careers to just a few centuries of one or two countries!), but we can turn our attention to some of the most fascinating areas and developments.

One oft-mentioned, and yet often misunderstood, feature of the European Bronze Age is the somewhat enigmatic Beaker phenomenon. Bell Beakers, a distinctive type of ceramic vessel, became popular across the breadth of Europe during the transitional period from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. You could drop a pin onto a map of Europe and chances are you'd be close to at least one of these ceramic pots, as they have been found everywhere from Ireland to Spain, the



The famous Mask of Agamemnon was found at Mycenae

Images: Getty Images

coast of Denmark to the island of Sardinia. There are striking similarities in the way the pots were used, very often appearing in burials (though it's worth pointing out that this is partly because burials are more often dug up than other contexts), alongside a common set of other objects, such as bronze daggers, arrowheads and stone bracers (armguards for archers). This led researchers from the 1930s onwards to think of a pan-European 'Beaker People' or 'Beaker culture'. Although the phenomenon is still sometimes expressed in these terms, it is now recognised that there is more variation than similarity between the groups of people who were fond of Beakers, and that it is instead better understood as a shared feature of different cultural groups.

Even if there is no such thing as a single Beaker culture or People, the widespread appearance of the objects highlights how Europe in the Bronze Age had extensive and active trade routes connecting people and enabling things, people and ideas to move as they never had before. Bronze Age trade gave rise to increased appetites for foreign and exotic goods, and this paved the way for societies to gain wealth through export and extensive trade networks. This opportunity was exploited expertly by one island civilisation in particular: Minoan Crete. Named for the legendary King Minos, the Minoan culture flourished at the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, with the construction of monumental palaces, such as the Knossos Palace, which had complex architecture, intricately carved columns and beautiful frescoes.

> It is now thought that the gold funerary mask of Agamemnon might not depict the Mycenean king after all

The complexity of the Minoan civilisation required a hugely sophisticated system of control, especially as the Minoan economy grew exponentially in the later 2nd millennium BCE, when they exported a range of products including olive oil, textiles, timber and luxury goods. They also imported a vast range of material, from everyday metals and other raw materials to exotic goods that allowed the emerging elites to demonstrate their wealth and inter-regional connections. This thriving economy led to the development of a writing system, Linear A. Unfortunately, the small surviving amount of Linear A writing means the script is undeciphered to this day. It did, however, directly lead to Linear B, the latter script that was used by the Mycenaean Greek culture, another of the most prominent Bronze Age cultures.

Mycenaean Greece, a civilisation that lasted for around 500 years between 1600 and 1100 BCE, took its lead from Minoan Crete, developing their writing system, building on their art and architecture and taking over from them as the pre-eminent merchants of the Bronze Age Mediterranean. The decipherment of the Mycenaean syllabic writing system in the 1950s meant archaeologists could better understand the early development of Ancient Greece, one of the most influential civilisations in the entire history of Europe. It was the Mycenaean period that was the setting for Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, some of the most significant works of literature ever written, and which has yielded some of the most stunning archaeological finds ever made, including the gold Mask of Agamemnon, found at Mycenae itself.

The growth of hierarchical societies, where people or groups could gain wealth and power over their peers, is perhaps most easily identifiable in the grandeur of the likes of the Minoans and Mycenaeans, with their palaces and stunning artwork, but this feature was common throughout Bronze Age Europe. Much of our evidence for stratified societies and ruling 'classes' comes from the burial record, as tombs with lavish or extensive grave goods are generally considered to be those of the most powerful, wealthy or high-status individuals in society.

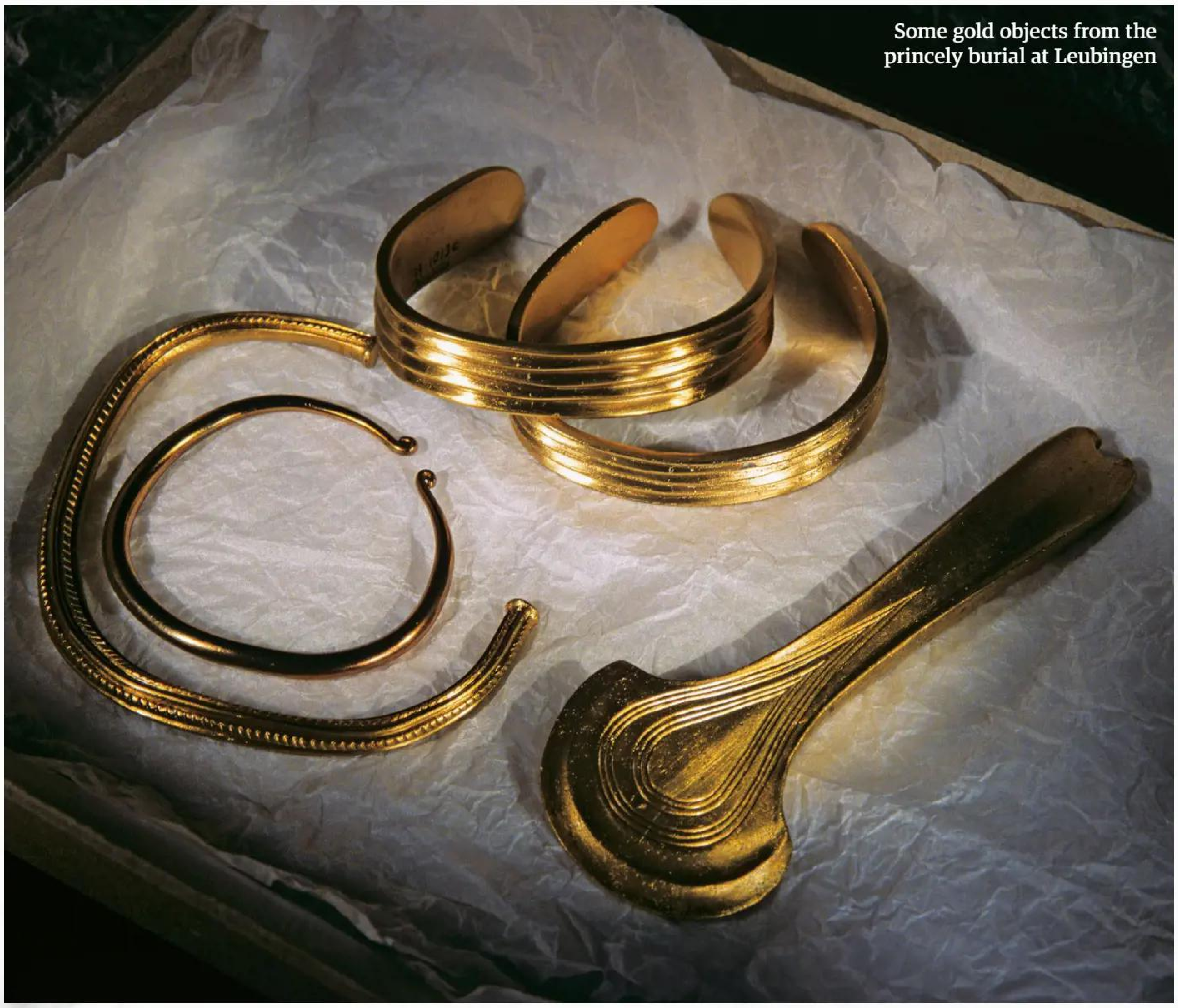
One such society, the Únětice culture, flourished in the German Bronze Age, succeeding the Beaker

COAST TO COAST

The dual roles played by Cornwall and Cyprus in making the Bronze Age

Unlike copper, which had a brief heyday as the metal par excellence before the onset of the Bronze Age (often referred to as the 'Chalcolithic' period), bronze had to be produced through the smelting of copper with another alloy, most often tin. Both metals needed to be mined, and while there are various sources for each throughout Europe, two of the most notable are Cornwall (tin) and Cyprus (copper). Although it may seem unlikely that over 4,000 years ago tin from Cornwall was being mined and sent as far as the eastern Mediterranean, isotopic analysis has shown that bronze artefacts found as far away as Israel were made with Cornish tin.

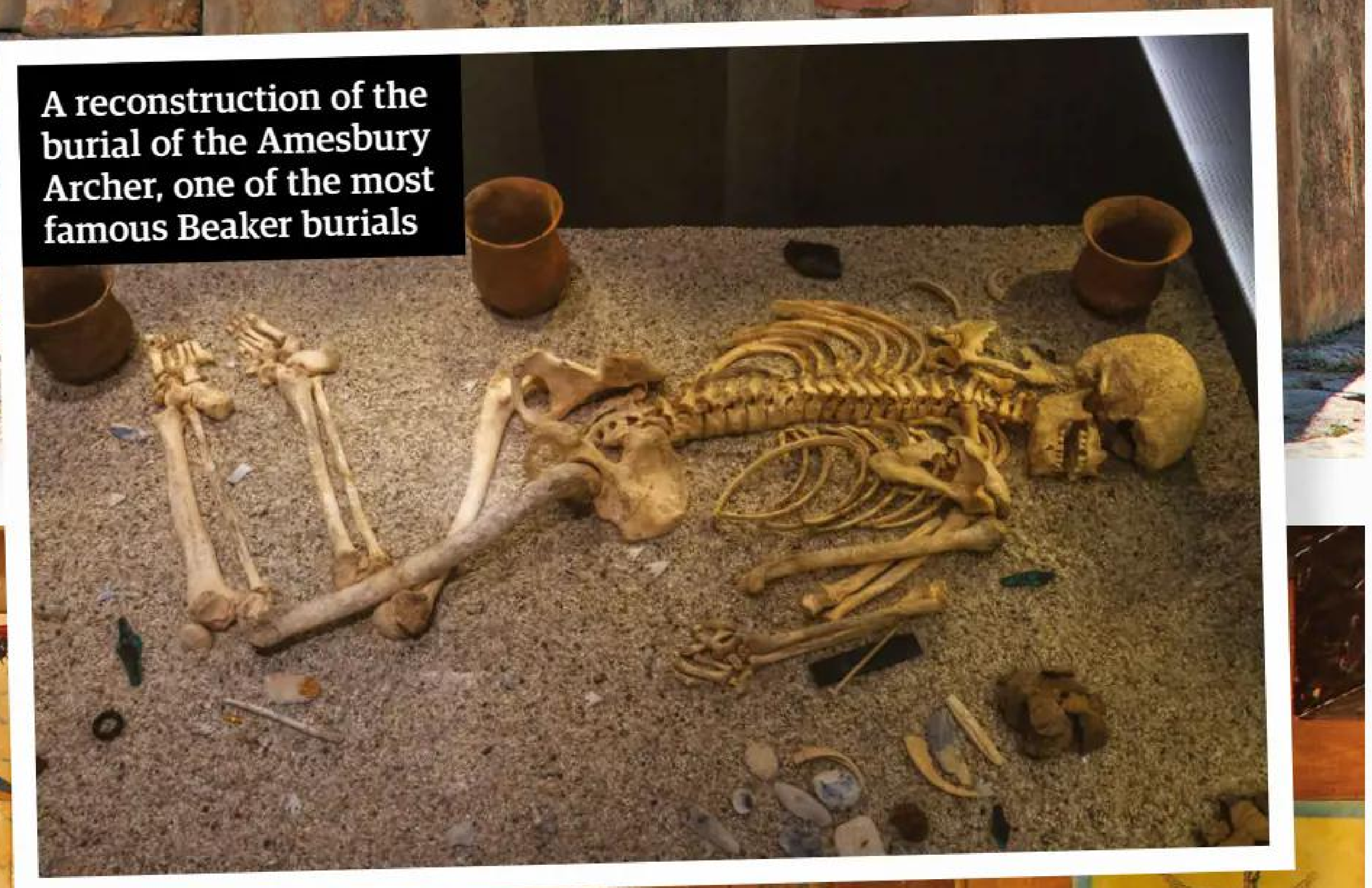
These artefacts found in the Ancient Near East would often use Cypriot copper in their production, as it was prized for its high quality. Cyprus became so highly regarded for its near-inexhaustible bronze reserves, that it became a major economic player in the Mediterranean, and thus a wealthy and prosperous island. Indeed, so important was Cyprus's role in the bronze trade that the word 'copper' derives from the island's name. Cyprus exported its bronze in distinctively shaped 'oxhide' ingots, which reached Western Europe and have even been identified on rock art in Sweden.


Some gold objects from the princely burial at Leubingen

and Corded Ware cultures (each named for the period's distinctive pottery decoration). This society is perhaps most notable for its series of hugely elaborate 'princely' graves, found at sites such as Leubingen, Helmsdorf and Dieskau. These not only had mounds overlaying them that were up to 90 metres (295 feet) wide and 20 metres (66 feet) high, but they included stone-built cores, sometimes 18 metres (59 feet) wide, enclosing a smaller oak tent-like structure containing the burial itself. If the complex architecture wasn't enough, their status was emphasised by the inclusion of bronze weapons, and an array of intricate gold jewellery. It is thought that the elites derived their wealth from controlling the flow of raw materials, such as metal and amber, from the east to the west and vice versa, proving that in the newly trade-heavy world of the European Bronze Age, there were many ways to build wealth and even more ways to display it.

You could make an argument that the Bronze Age was the period when Europe as a concept really got going. Before the Bronze Age, the continent was populated by groups of people settling in one place, farming, and building societies, but often without an expansive network of contact or trade. In the Bronze Age, societies began to emerge with ruling classes, where wealth, and power could be built through trade and control of the movement of people and objects. Warfare increased, an affinity for display became more widespread, and ideas could spread. The subsequent 2,500 years of European history have been built on Bronze Age foundations.

The Knossos Palace in Greece


A reconstruction of the burial of the Amesbury Archer, one of the most famous Beaker burials

One of the frescos in the Knossos Palace

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

5TH CENTURY BCE

HOW DEMOCRACY WAS BORN

The city-state of Athens brought the foundations and the functioning of democracy to the world

The origins of democratic government have long been attributed to Ancient Greece, and the city-state of Athens is seen as its cradle. While Athens did indeed produce a functioning democratic process, it was not alone among the city-states in developing the elements of democracy. However, Athenian democracy proved to be the most enduring among the ancients, and its history is well documented in comparison to the others.

Even as Athens reached the height of its power and prestige, the seeds of democracy were being sown. In the early 6th century, Solon initiated government reforms that enhanced the participation of the citizenry. Around 508 BCE, Cleisthenes presided over a flourishing democracy, and in the mid-5th century BCE, Ephialtes introduced reforms that further altered and refined the operation of the Athenian government. The first known functioning democracy came into being in the city of Athens, and those other city-states that initiated democratic institutions were likely to have emulated the evolving Athenian model.

> Democracy is derived from the Greek words 'demos' (people) and 'kratos' (power) and is literally translated as 'people power'

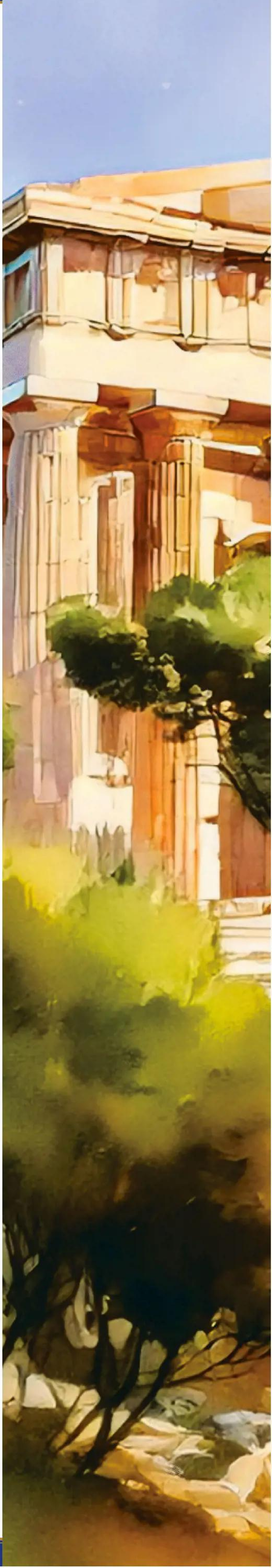
The Athenian version was a direct democracy, as those eligible to participate could cast their votes directly in matters of law and justice. The process extended beyond Athens proper and into the Attic peninsula; however, it is important to not that all inhabitants of the city and its environs were not full participants in the democratic process. The population of greater Athens is estimated to have been around 250,000 or more during the 5th century BCE, and included slaves and non-Athenian residents.

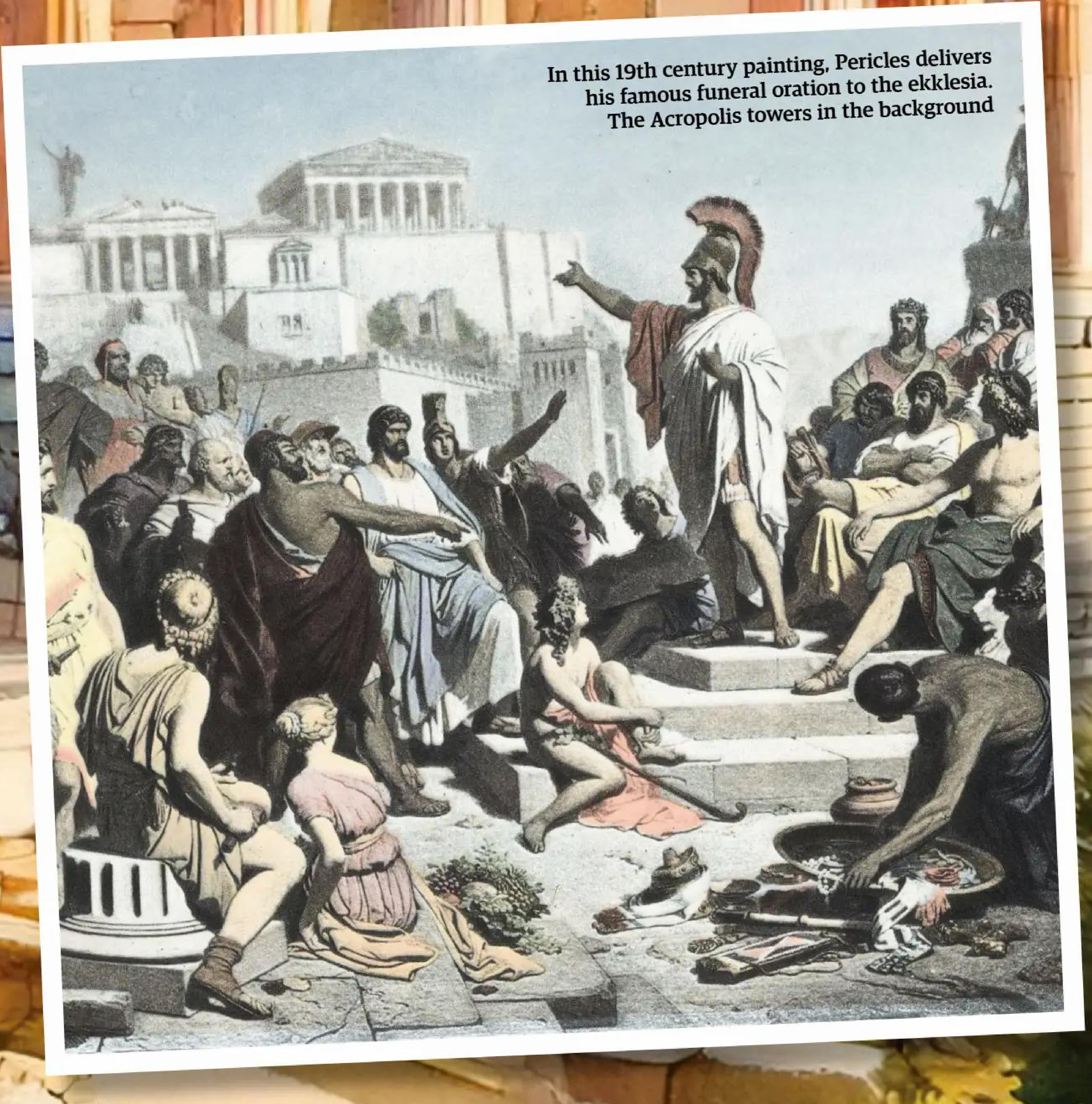
The first test for participation in the democracy was proof of citizenship. Men who were over 18 years of age were required to attest that they were not slaves and that their parents were born in Athens. Women were excluded. Only roughly 30,000 to 50,000 residents were eligible, and scholars assert that the number never surpassed more than 30 per cent of the city-state's population.

The emergence of Athenian democracy was preceded by other forms of government that existed at one time or another for at least 300 years after the founding of the city-state, or polis, around 900 BCE. The earliest government in the polis was a monarchy. A king, surrounded by a close group of noble advisors, ruled for about 100 years. Prosperity, however, brought the demise of the monarchy. Men who owned property and gained some measure of wealth through trade and commerce began to desire a voice in their own government.

These newly influential noblemen began to convene on the Areopagus, a hill near the city, and took their name from it. The Areopagus developed into a body that asserted political power and elected nine 'rulers,' known as Archons, to govern the city-state in an oligarchy. The Archons did not exercise absolute power. Their decisions were subject to the approval of the Areopagus.

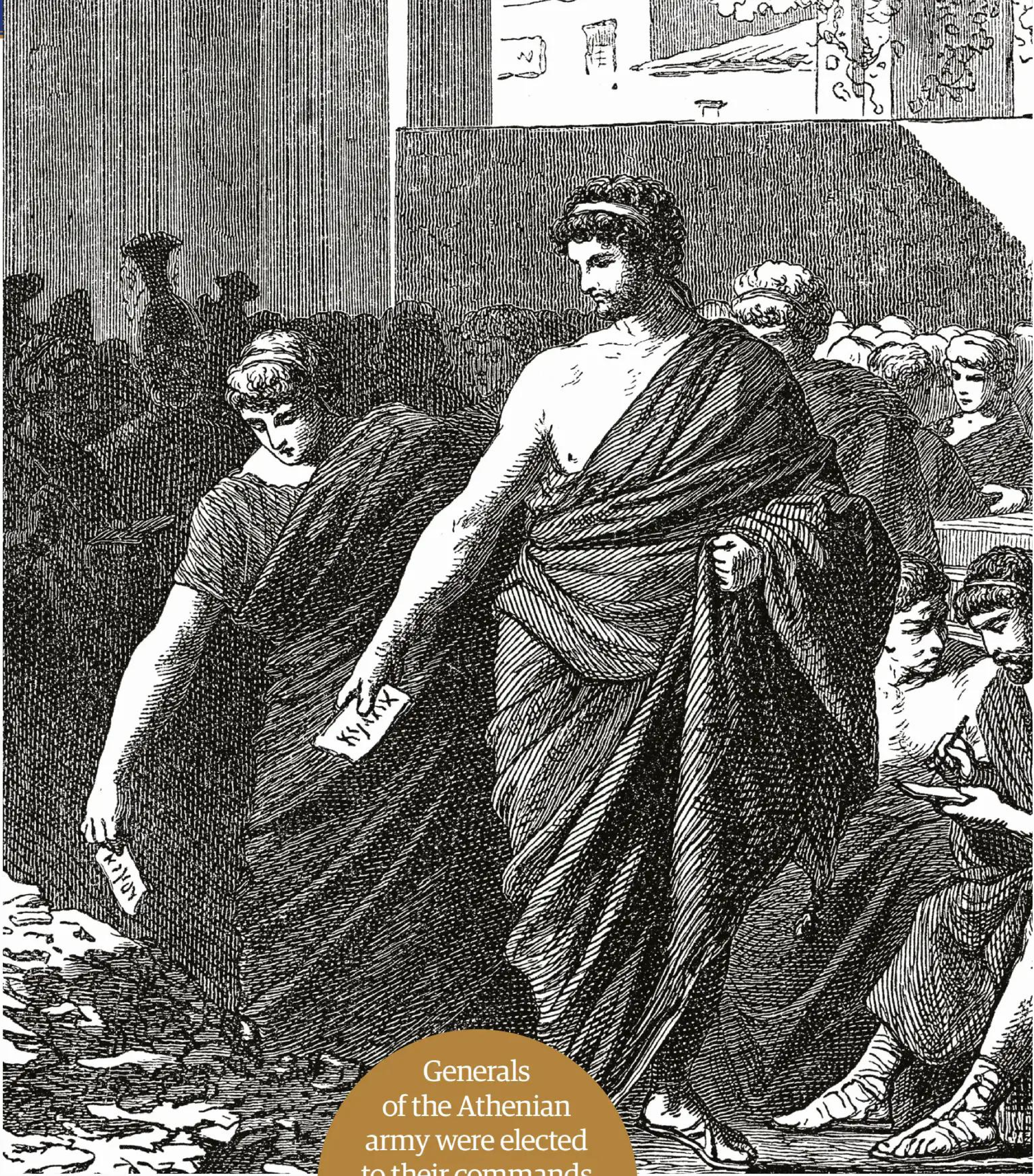
By the mid-7th century, a social class structure had become well defined. The wealthy, aristocratic ruling class, including members of the Areopagus, fell into disfavour as workers and members of lower classes resented their continuing affluence, which was often maintained at the expense of those less fortunate. Greek society devolved into civil unrest, and amid the chaos assertive men came forward,





In this 19th century painting, Pericles delivers his famous funeral oration to the ekklesia. The Acropolis towers in the background

Images: Alamy, Adobe Firefly (AI-Generated)



promising to restore order. Often with the support of the people, these so-called 'tyrants' claimed power in a radical departure from traditional forms of accession, such as wealth or family bloodlines.

SOLON SOWS SEEDS

In 594 BCE, Solon, a statesman, poet, and archon, was elevated to rule in Athens. During difficult economic times, many Athenians had been forced to seek financial support from the aristocratic class. In exchange for loans, they were compelled to mortgage their lands and even offer themselves and family members as collateral. Often enough, such practices resulted in burdensome debt that could not be retired. Farmers and merchants found themselves enslaved to the wealthy. A financial crisis loomed, particularly as farmers lost the use of their lands, and economic collapse threatened the foundation of Athenian prosperity.

Solon set about redressing the inequity of a social structure based on wealth alone. He developed a constitution that divided Athenian society into four classes based on financial capacity and allowing members of the top three classes to serve as archons. Every Athenian was accorded the right to appeal a legal decision to a jury, reducing the power of the nine archons in such matters in favour of a larger, more equitable body. Solon then ended the custom of loans secured by an individual's freedom.

Prior to Solon's reforms, the council of the Areopagus, former archons themselves, had elected nine new archons each year. Therefore, only aristocrats were elected to the body. Solon's constitution provided that all Athenian citizens should vote for a slate of candidates for the position of archon. From these candidates, nine individuals were then selected by lot. Under the constitution of Solon, the Areopagus was charged as the guardian of the law and a council of 400 citizens formed a more representative assembly. While retaining certain aspects of the oligarchy, Solon then brought forward certain aspects of the democracy that would later come to pass in Athens.

In an era of tyrants, Solon was certainly not one of them. Although he came from an aristocratic family and was probably given the opportunity for self-aggrandisement, he chose to champion the cause of the lower classes. In one last selfless act, he required the Athenians to abide by the model constitution that had been put in place for ten years. He then left the city-state of Athens for an extended period of time.

Generals of the Athenian army were elected to their commands rather than chosen by lottery, as some other officials were chosen

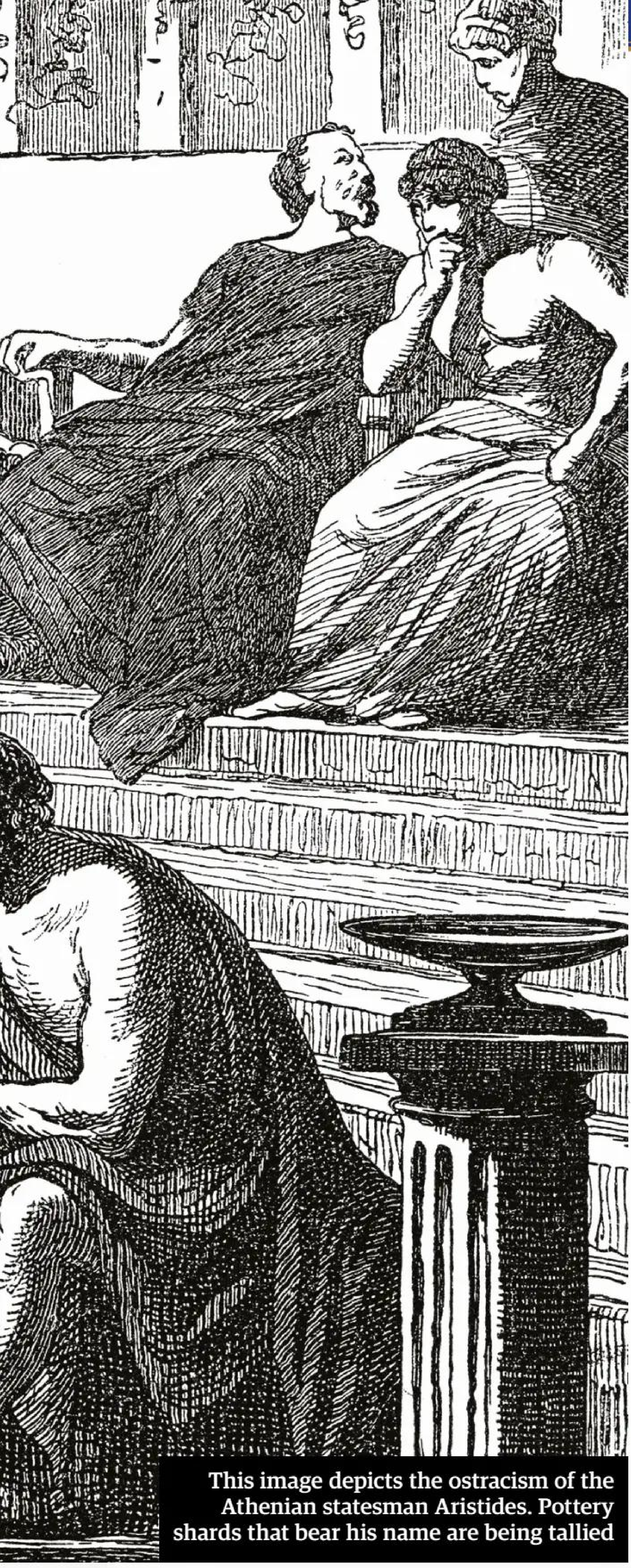
The wave of democracy that had begun to build in Athens during the early 6th century BCE was advanced somewhat ironically during the rule of the tyrant Peisistratos and his sons, Hippias and Hipparchus, which lasted about 50 years from 560 to 510 BCE. Using his army of mercenaries to support his rule, Peisistratos nevertheless maintained the goodwill of the people and even expanded the power of the governing bodies established by Solon. He continued to weaken the influence of the aristocracy and encouraged trade and agriculture while presiding over the redistribution of some lands on the Attic peninsula. The Alcmaeonidae family enlisted assistance from a Spartan army to eventually depose Hippias.

A brief struggle for supremacy in Athens ensued. Isagoras was elected an archon in 508 BCE, but his rival, Cleisthenes, a member of the Alcmaeonidae family, went directly to the people for support and gained much favour among all of the lower classes. When Isagoras summoned the Spartan army again to quash Cleisthenes, the Athenians protested heavily and then sent Isagoras and the Spartan army packing.

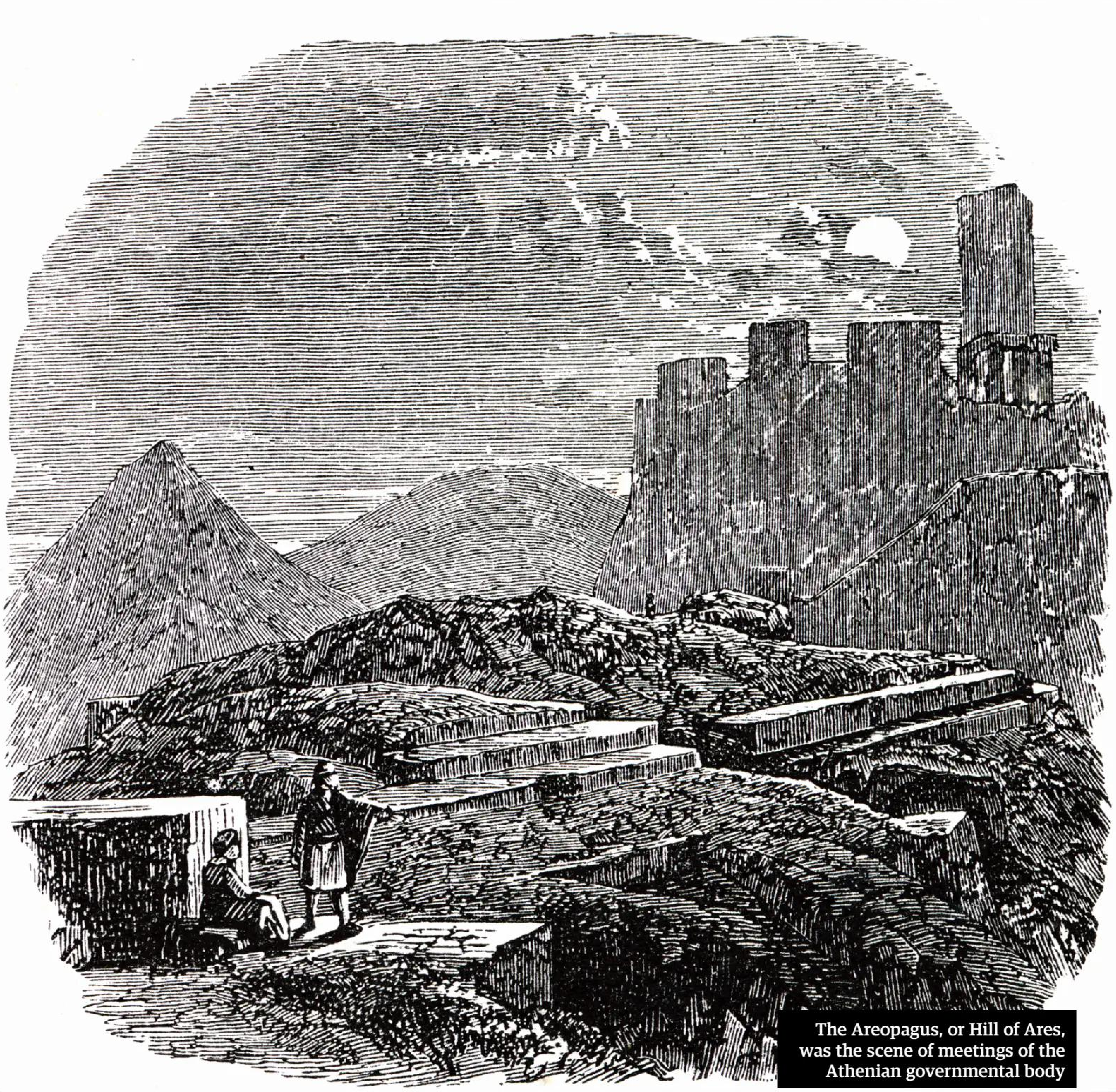
THE LAWS OF DRACO

Around 621 BCE, Draco, the first recorded legislator of Ancient Greece, is believed to have introduced a written legal code. The written code replaced a system of oral and tribal law with one that was more uniform and intended for interpretation by a court of law. The code itself is remembered as quite harsh, and it is from the author's name that the modern word 'draconian' is derived. Little is known of Draco's life, although he is believed to have been a member of the nobility from the region of Attica. He was born around 650 BCE and died at the age of approximately 50.

Draco's code provided the first written constitution of Athens, and the people had requested that he prepare it – although they were unaware that it would be so severe. The lawgiver was once supposedly asked why the sentence of death was so prevalent in the code. He responded that those convicted of minor offenses deserved the punishment while he could think of no greater penalty for major crimes. The code also favoured nobility and the aristocratic class. For reasons that remain unclear, Draco was banished from Athens to the island of Aegina, where he spent much of his life.



This image depicts the ostracism of the Athenian statesman Aristides. Pottery shards that bear his name are being tallied



The Areopagus, or Hill of Ares, was the scene of meetings of the Athenian governmental body

CLEISTHENES AND FULL BLOOM

During the last decade of the 6th century BCE, Cleisthenes elevated Athenian democracy to prominence and became revered as its father. Although his period of rule and reform was brief, lasting only six years from 508 to 502 BCE, the impact of his measures was enormous, and it would last for two centuries.

Cleisthenes effectively eroded the influence of the aristocratic class and its distinction from the middle and working classes with the introduction of reforms that shaped a new consciousness among Athenians, a new perspective on themselves and on their relationship to the city-state. Cleisthenes made the village, known as the 'deme', the basic political unit of the new society. Rather than identifying themselves as individuals tied to families, citizens began to call themselves by names associated with their home villages. This emphasis on geographic location rather than lineage fostered a culture of 'Athenian identity' rather than a family link and helped to prevent the rise of another tyrant to challenge authority.

Each deme was administered by a demarch, whose responsibilities were similar to a town mayor and included placing individuals in three groups or 'thirds,' including verified males who were over 18 and therefore citizens, those citizens selected to serve on the council, and those that were eligible for participation in the assembly. To further engage every Athenian citizen in the process of government, Cleisthenes reorganised the social structure further, effectively abolishing an old system of tribes and replacing it with a new framework. Each of the thirds was assigned to one of ten new tribes. Each tribe contained three thirds, one from the city, one from the coastal area, and one from the interior of the greater city-state. In turn, each tribe sent 50 citizens annually to serve on a new council of 500, increased in number from 400 since the time of Solon.

Athenian women were restricted in movement in public places and often segregated from the male population

The new structure brought together citizens from all areas of Athens. The tribes became tremendously influential in the democratic process, while the citizenry was thoroughly engaged - all the way to the local level. Cleisthenes possessed the forethought to eliminate the possibility of regional or provincial politics from undermining the process with the passage of time. He asserted that once a citizen was registered in a particular deme, he then remained with that deme for the purposes of governmental participation regardless of whether he relocated to another area of the city-state of Athens.

To add an air of legitimacy and historical context to the new social and political apparatus, Cleisthenes named the ten new tribes after one of the city-state's heroes of antiquity. These were supposedly handed down by Apollo, the sun god, through the oracle of Delphi. The ten heroes included Pandion, Oeneus, Leos, Cecrops, Hippothoon, Erechtheus, Antiochus, Acamas, Aegeus, and Ajax. These heroes were further immortalised and revered with the placement of their statues in the agora of Athens, near the area where new laws and proclamations were publicly placed for the people to view.

STRUCTURE AND STRENGTH

Athenian democracy is remembered historically as a sometimes raucous, litigious, and contentious institution in its practical application. Still, it fundamentally revolutionised the role of government in the lives of the people and their own ability to influence the course of events. Although full participation was denied to many residents of Athens, the emergence of the democratic process was nevertheless one of the most profound events in the history of the Western world. The reformed structure introduced by Cleisthenes around 507 BCE retained institutions whose roots lay with Solon nearly a century earlier.

Cleisthenes called his system of government demokratia, or 'rule by the people'. Its basic structure included three pillars that served to maintain equity, dispense justice, and write and interpret laws.

The assembly, or ekklesia, was the central governing authority in Athens. In its early period the ekklesia met only ten times per year. However, that number was later expanded to 40 times, while called meetings might also take place. The meetings were open to any citizen of Athens and were held in a theatre on a hillside called Pnyx just west of the great Athenian Acropolis. The ekklesia undertook the writing of new laws and the revision of those already in force. It deliberated questions of foreign policy, including whether or not to go to war, and it held public officials accountable for their conduct.

Adult male citizens considered it their responsibility to attend assembly meetings, but duties with the armed forces, the harvest, or other activities usually limited the gatherings to about 5,000 people. At times attendance was compulsory. Slaves would extend a rope stained in red across the agora to herd citizens into an ekklesia meeting. Those whose clothing bore telltale crimson marks were then fined. By the late 5th century BCE attendees to the ekklesia were paid for their time. Only the first 6,000 to arrive received compensation, and the red rope was still in use – as a barrier to the late arrivals.

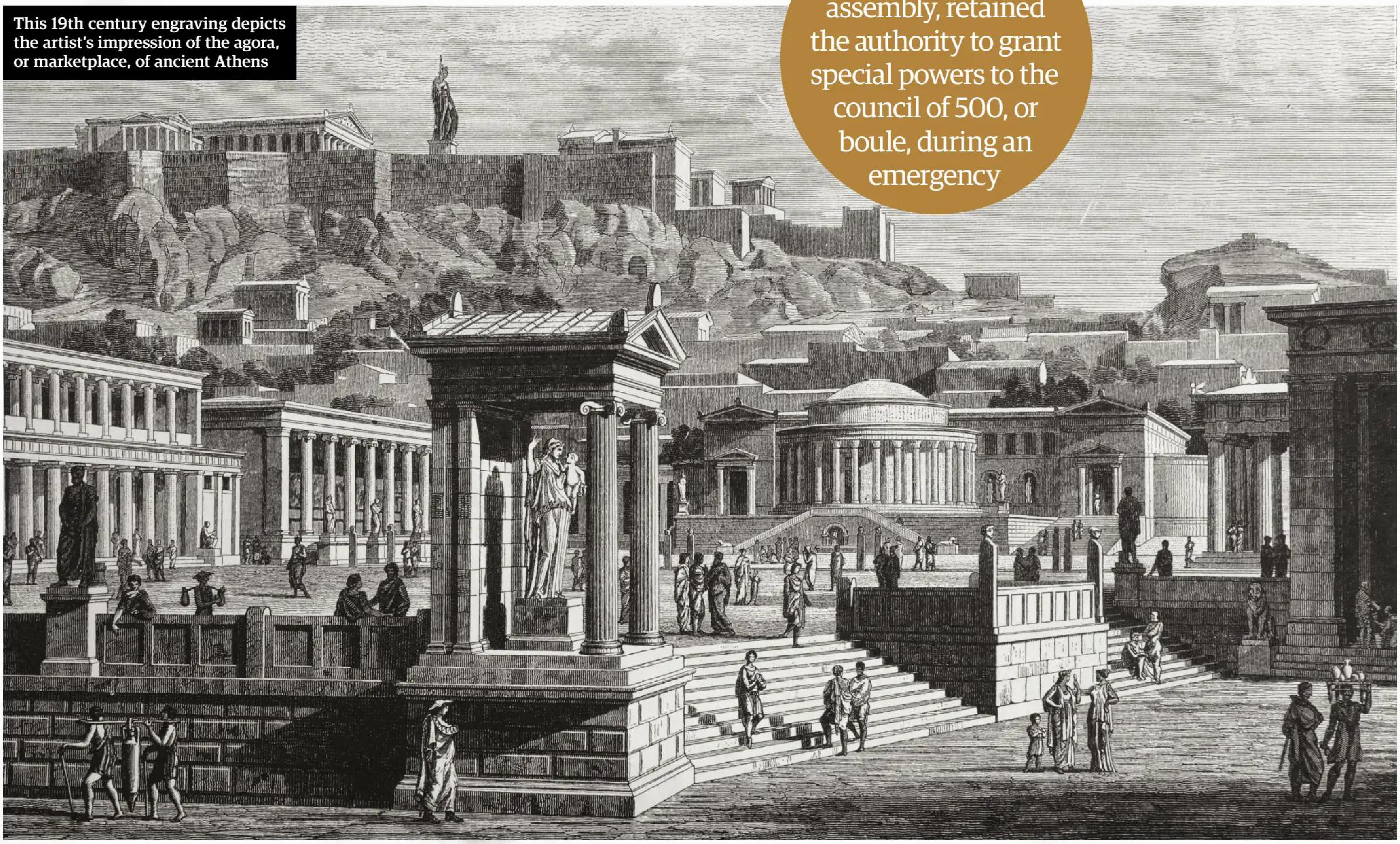
"The authority of the boule was extensive, ranging from the disposition of government property to livestock"

The council of 500 convened under Cleisthenes was called the 'boule'. Those 50 men chosen from the ten tribes to comprise the council served terms of one year. The authority of the boule was extensive, ranging from the disposition of government property from ships to livestock and receiving emissaries from other city-states. The boule met every day, and since it was responsible for much of the routine conduct of government-related business in Athens probably exerted the most significant influence on the lives of the people. The primary function of the boule was to determine those matters of state that were worthy of presentation before the ekklesia. Therefore, the boule exerted tremendous influence in the political life of the city-state and the democratic process.

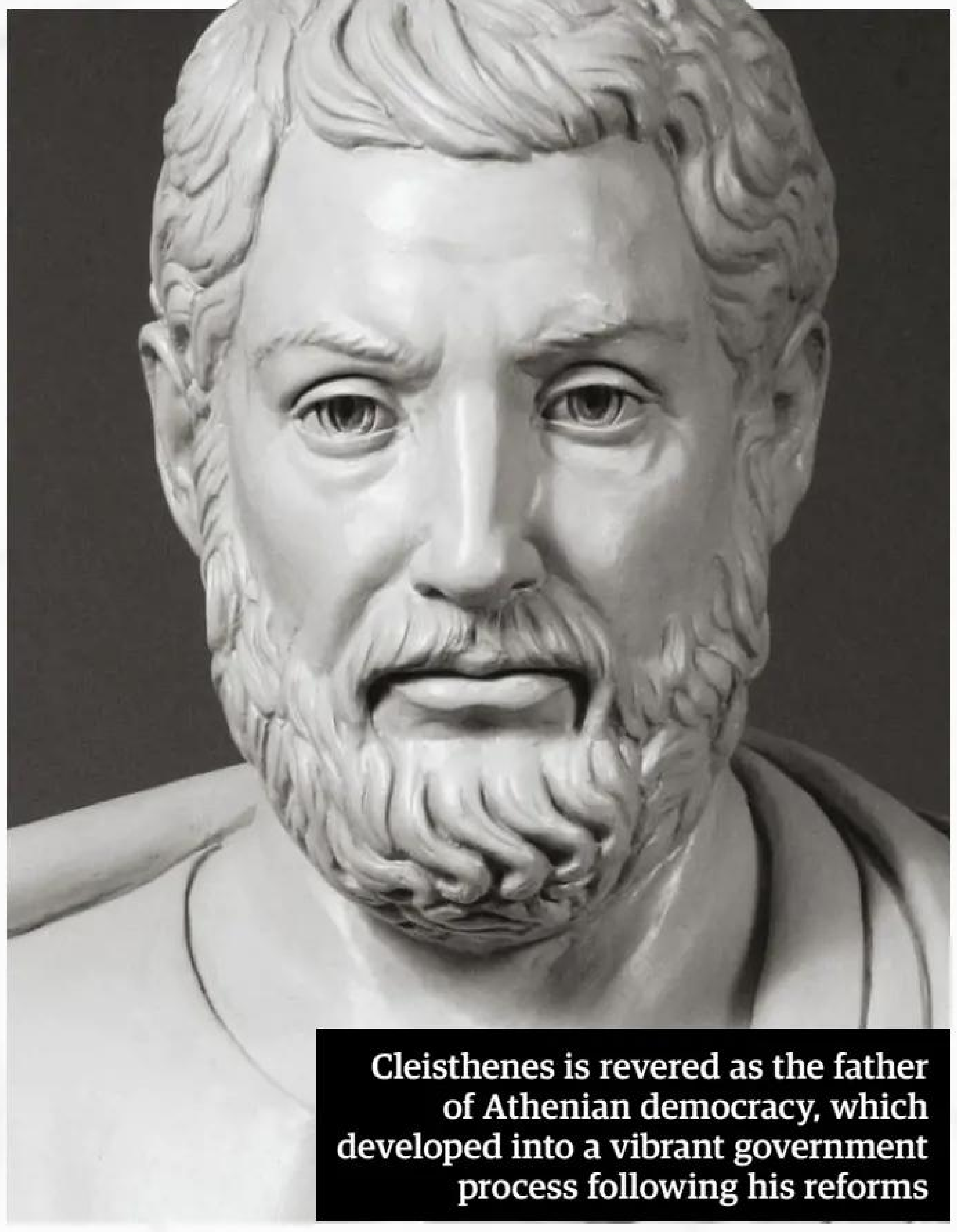
Interestingly, those who would occupy positions within the boule were determined by lot rather than ballot. The reason was simple. An individual chosen through a drawing could attribute his selection to pure luck. An election, however, was subject to outside influences such as bribery or back room dealing. Elections might also perpetuate a permanently entitled class of officials within the boule over time and promote the temptation for personal gain. Again, the lottery approach would safeguard against such a situation. A tantalising question remains, though, as historians have noted with some chagrin that certain citizens and members of their families seemed to serve with much greater regularity than others. Were these few individuals just lucky?

An integral component of Athenian democracy, the court system, or 'dikasteria', was a functional marvel. Each day a pool of citizens, males over 30 years old, assembled. From their number, 500 were chosen to serve as jurors. The people

The ekklesia, or assembly, retained the authority to grant special powers to the council of 500, or boule, during an emergency


This 19th century engraving depicts the artist's impression of the agora, or marketplace, of ancient Athens

The ruins of the Pnyx, the meeting place of the ancient ekklesia, lie empty. The speaker's platform remains in the centre



Cleisthenes is revered as the father of Athenian democracy, which developed into a vibrant government process following his reforms

brought cases directly to court. There was no police force in the city-state to arrest and charge an individual; therefore, the jury held tremendous power in the discharge of cases that other citizens presented during arguments for and against any accused party.

Public cases were argued first by the prosecutor and then by the defendant. Each was allowed a single speech of three hours' duration, and each was timed with a water clock. If a case was to be heard in private, the time for arguments was significantly diminished. A case was forbidden to last longer than a single day, and jurors were routinely vocal, loudly expressing their support or doubt of a certain point. In either case, when both sides had presented their points of view, there was minimal discussion among the jurors – no time allotted for formal deliberations – and the vote on guilt or innocence was taken.

There were no prohibitions as to what kinds of cases could be brought before an Athenian jury, which sometimes allowed individuals to drag enemies into the public arena for embarrassment or vengeance. Jurors were required to interpret the motive of the accuser or plaintiff as well as the guilt or innocence of the defendant. Beginning around 462 BCE, jurors began receiving pay for their services with the expectation that compensation made the job an endeavour in which every citizen might participate, not just the aristocratic, wealthy, or those who could afford to lose wages from their regular vocation.

At approximately the same time, Ephialtes began a successful effort to further reduce the influence of the Areopagus. He prosecuted members of the body for poor administration and successfully divided much of its remaining power between the ekklesia, the boule, and the dikasteria. When Ephialtes was finished, the Areopagus was no longer the guardian of the constitution, but merely a court in itself that adjudicated cases involving murder and religion.

TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY

Ephialtes was assassinated in 461 BCE, allowing his rival Pericles to consolidate power. While the democracy continued to function, the influence of Pericles became so great that he was deemed the "first citizen of Athens." Controversy surrounds the rule of Pericles. Some historians believe he advanced democracy through measures that benefitted the lower classes, while others assert that his personal power and sway over the government contributed to its decline.

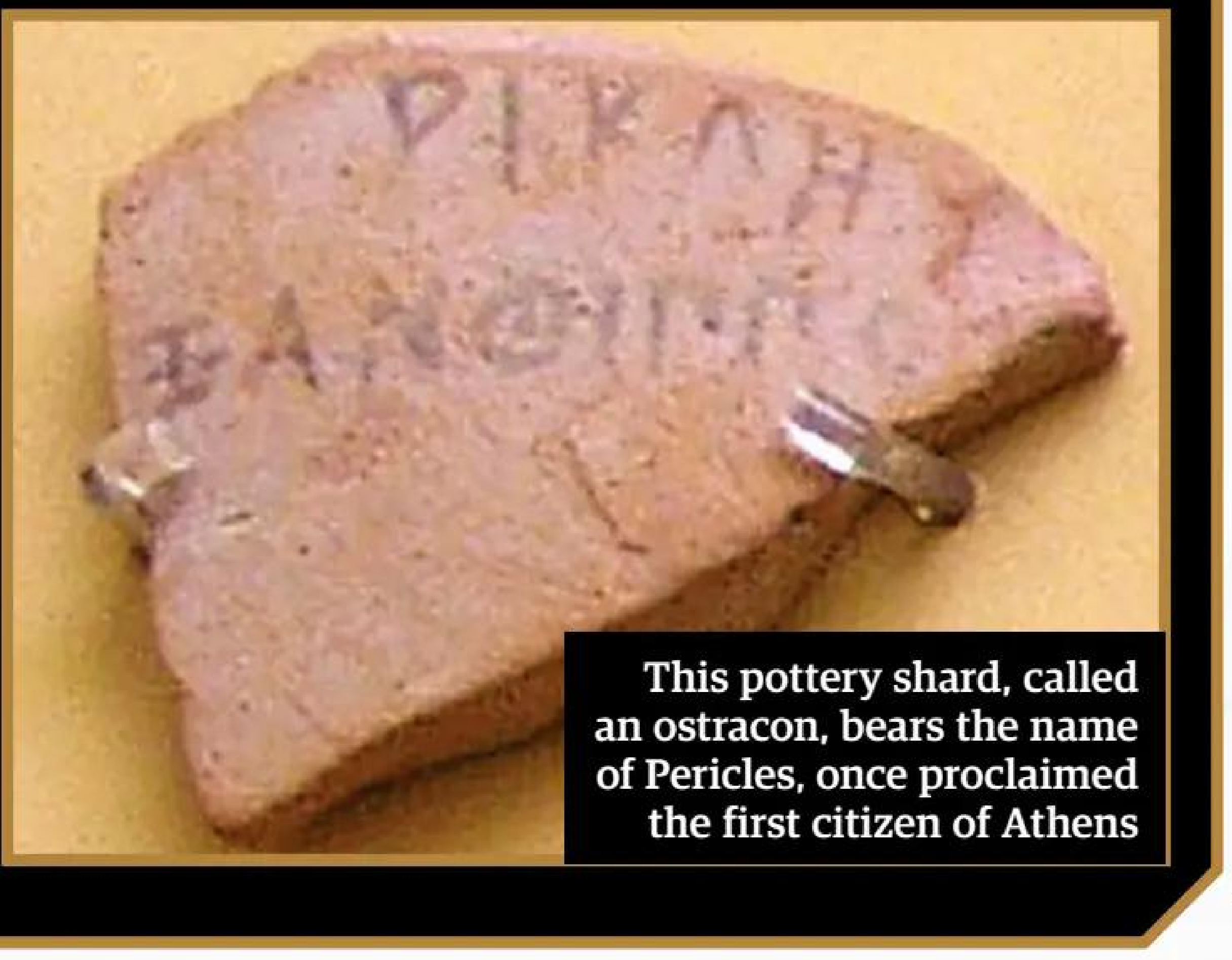
Democratic ideals in Athens endured despite challenges during the years of the Peloponnesian War, including the short-lived return of an oligarchy in 411 BCE. Defeat at the hands of the Spartans in 404 BCE brought the rule of the Thirty Tyrants, a puppet government that lasted only a year before the return of democracy. In 338 BCE, however, the irresistible tide of the Macedonian army, with King Philip II at its head, conquered most of Greece, ending the noble experiment in Athenian democracy.

Despite its relatively short period of existence in Athens, the concepts of democracy survived to later influence the Roman Empire and in turn to shape modern democratic governments.

THROUGH OSTRACISM

The ekklesia, or assembly, a powerful body of the Athenian democracy, retained one peculiar power – that of ostracism. An innovation of Cleisthenes probably intended to banish any individual who posed a threat to the Athenian democracy, ostracism provided for the expulsion of that individual following a vote of the ekklesia. Annually the assembly voted whether or not to conduct an ostracism. If the vote was in favour, the process took place at another meeting held within a few months of the first. Citizens voted by scratching the name of a person that they wanted banished on a shard of pottery called an 'ostraka.' At least 6,000 citizens were required to vote in order for these clay ballots to be tallied.

The individual that got the highest number of votes was required to leave Athens for ten years; however, he did not forfeit his property or lose his rights as an Athenian citizen. Ostracism may have actually been looked upon as an honour. At times an individual became so powerful that he posed a threat to democracy itself. Among those who were ostracised during their lifetime were Themistocles, hero of the wars with Persia, Thucydides, politician and historian, and Alcibiades, statesman, orator, and military commander.



This pottery shard, called an ostracon, bears the name of Pericles, once proclaimed the first citizen of Athens

© Alamy

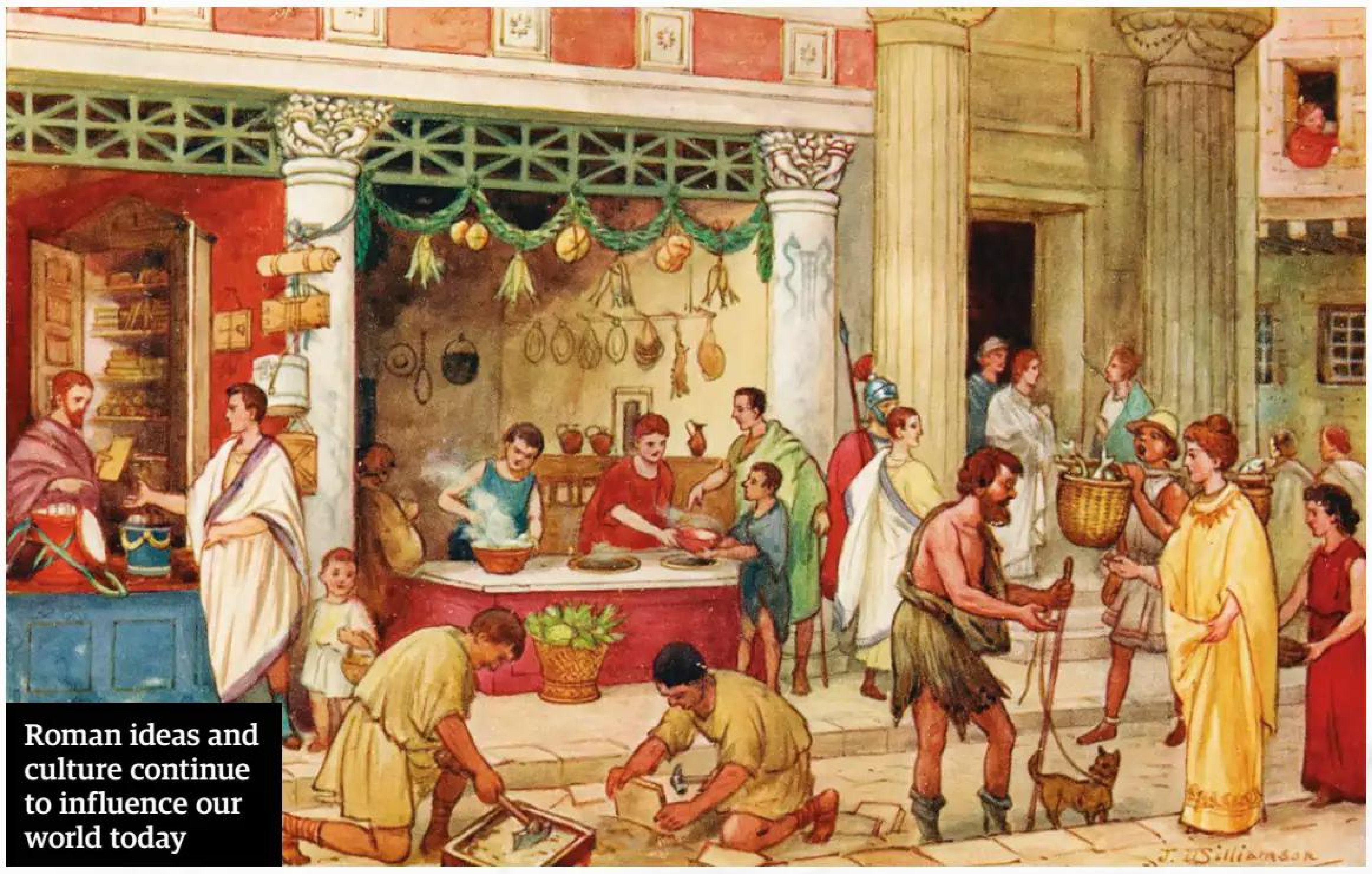
509 BCE-476 CE

WHAT HAVE THE ROMANS DONE FOR US?

They came, they saw and they conquered - and they shaped modern Europe at the same time

Written by Kate Marsh & Jessica Leggett

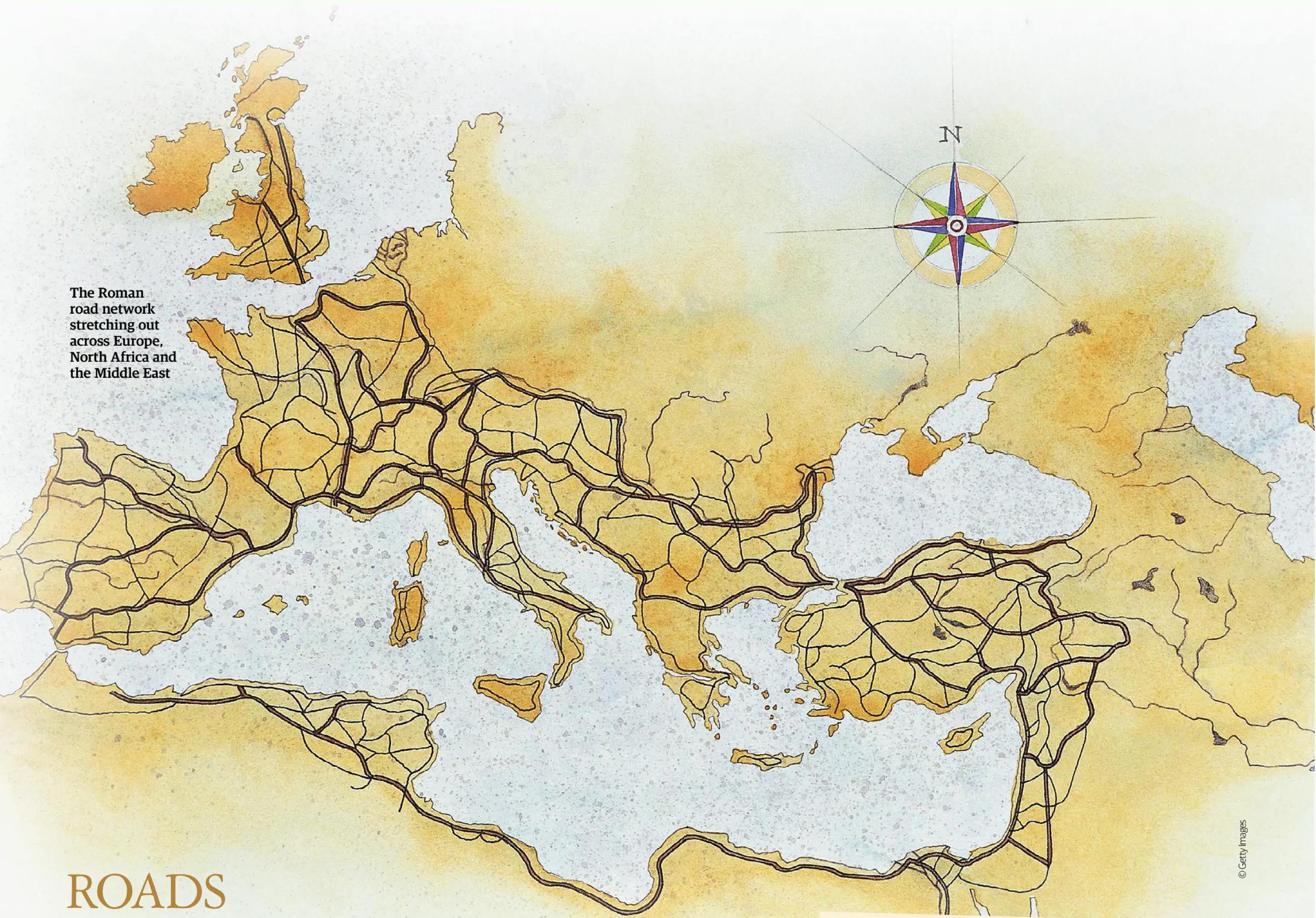
At its height, the Roman Empire was sprawled out over more than five million square kilometres. It was the main state on the Mediterranean Sea, and reached as far north as Scotland. It stretched down into North Africa and came to dominate the Middle East and beyond. A nation that big never really disappears - its culture and traditions seep into the people and the landscape, leaving a legacy that can never truly be scrubbed out. A lot of Roman ways did would disappear over time: paganism died out, with temples being converted into churches or falling into disrepair; gladiators stopped battling it out in the arenas; and phalluses stopped being used as lucky charms. But the Romans had been around so long, and their customs proved to be impossible to leave behind. It's nigh on impossible to count the ways in which the Romans shaped modern Europe both physically and culturally, so here are just ten of the multitude of things that they left behind after the fall of the Western Roman Empire.



Roman ideas and culture continue to influence our world today

What Have the Romans Done for Us?

Illustration: Joe Cummings



The Roman road network stretching out across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East

© Getty Images

ROADS

How to travel around Europe

Not all roads lead to Rome, but some made by the Romans are still in use today. While building materials differed across the empire, the formation was always the same: the road itself was raised, built up in layers of rocks, stones, gravel and sand, with ditches on either side for drainage. Roads were incredibly important in such a vast territory – they sped up movement, allowing troops to get around quicker, and they boosted trade and communication.

Perhaps the most famous example of this in Britain is Watling Street, a name derived from what the Saxons called it. Stretching from modern Dover, though London and up Wroxeter, it connected the port closest to mainland Europe with the rest of Britannia. It also saw its fair share of history – it was the site of Boudicca's final defeat to the Romans, and it's thought that the pilgrims in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales used it, too. Today it exists as the A2 between Dover and London, and the A5 from London to Wroxeter.

ECCE CRVX DOMINI
FVGITE
PARTES ADVERSAE
VICIT LEO
DE TRIBV IVDA

Signs everywhere in Vatican City are written in Latin rather than Italian

© Alamy

LANGUAGE

You're probably already talking like a Roman

Spoken by the majority of Romans, Latin was the foremost language of the empire and is often referred to as dead. Really, it's anything but. Europe's Romance languages – French, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian and Spanish, among others – have all stemmed from Latin, thanks to the widespread Roman occupation. Thanks to their common root, there are a lot of similarities between them, meaning that if you know one, it's easier to learn and understand another. Of course, Germanic languages like German, Dutch and English have also been influenced by Latin.

But Latin itself was widely used across Europe until the Middle Ages as the administrative language for states like the Holy Roman Empire and the kingdom of France. It was also, and still is, the language of the Roman Catholic Church, with services conducted in Medieval Latin. The Renaissance didn't stop this, with theological and scientific tomes being written in Latin.

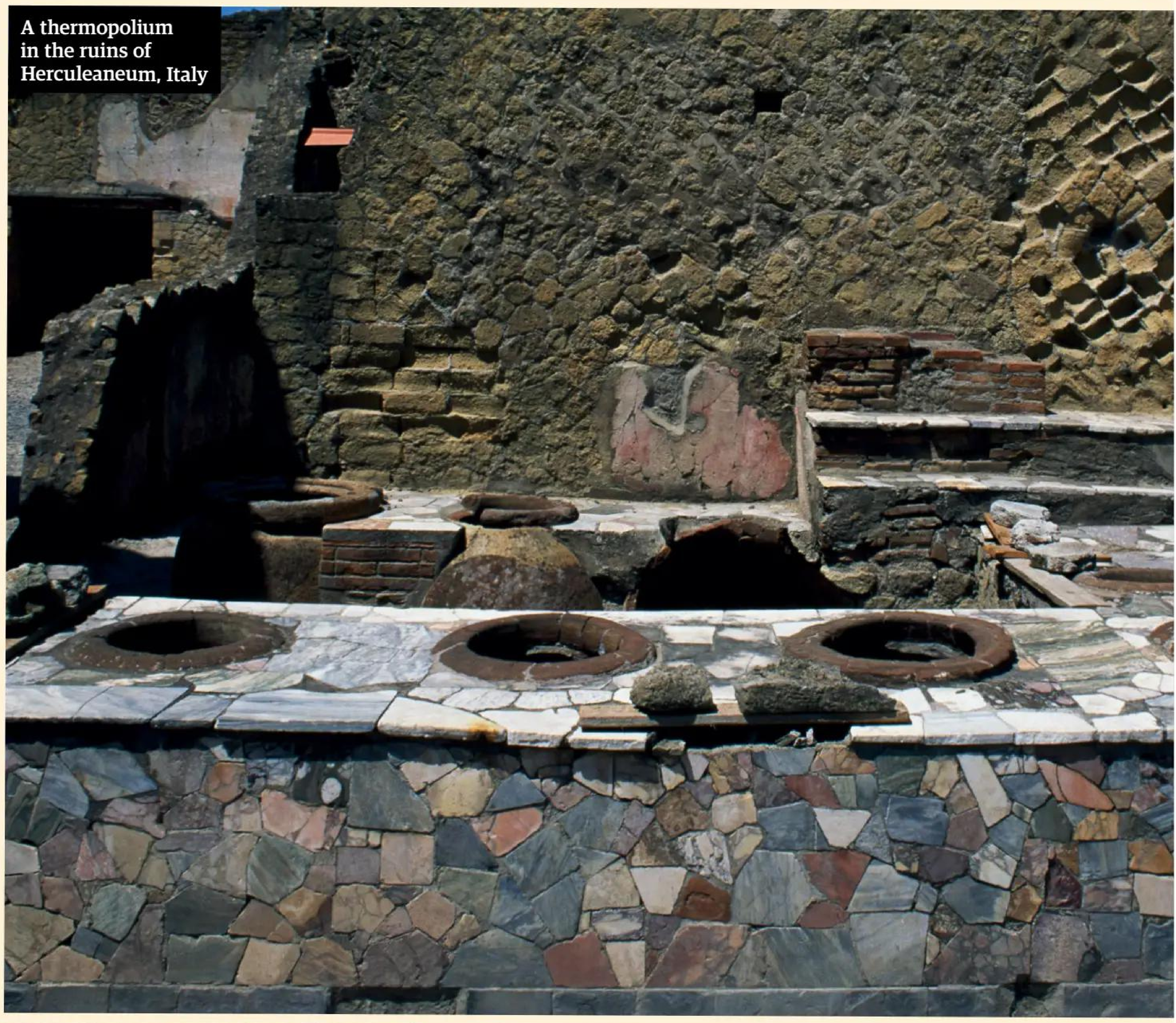
Latin is still used today – animals all have Latin classifications, and bones in the body often have Latin names, like scapula and coccyx. But one country still uses Latin as its official language: the Vatican City. In fact, it's the only country in the world where you can use an ATM in Latin.

FAST FOOD

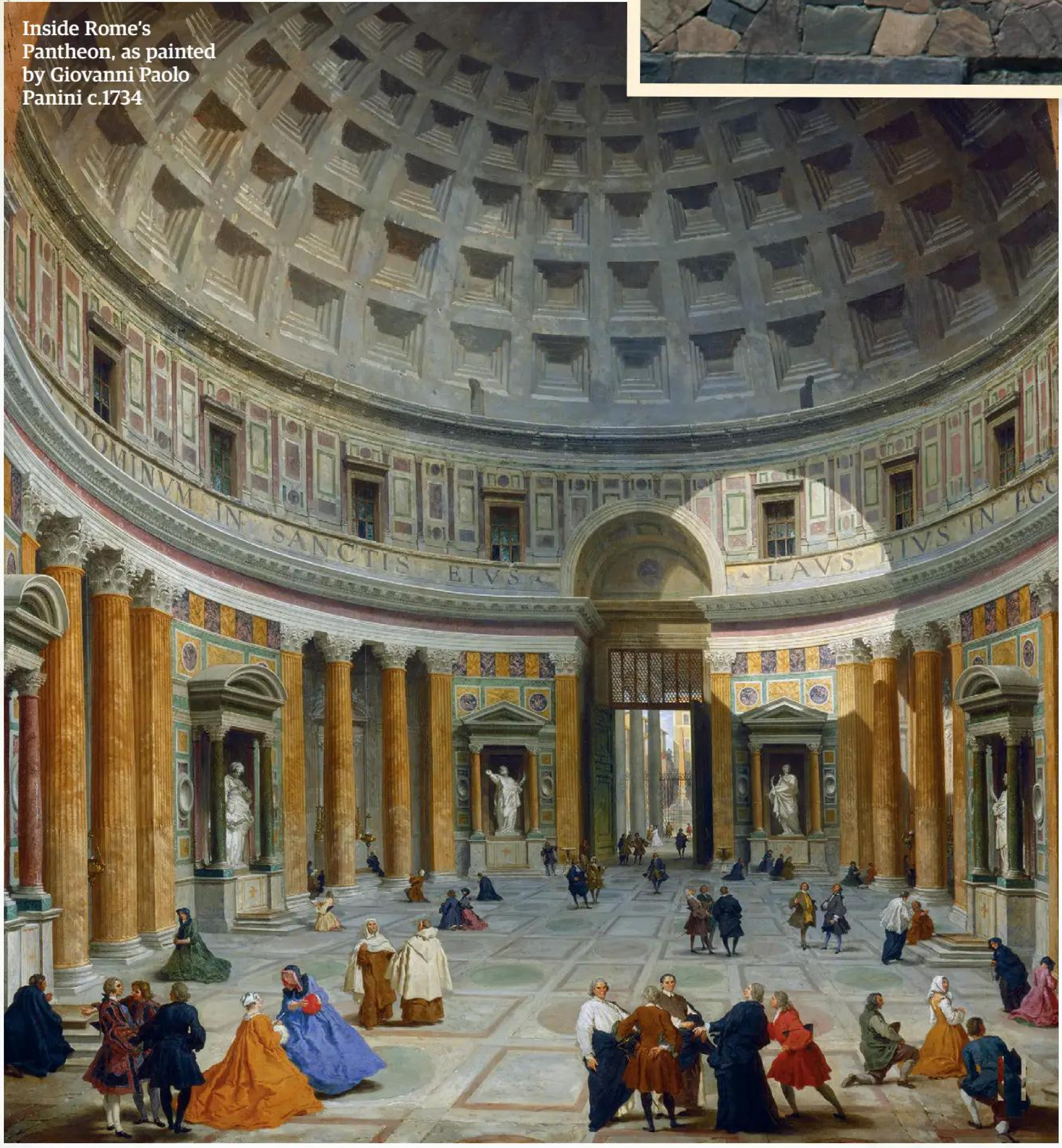
Ancient Rome's answer to Burger King

If you enjoy your food and you like it quick, you should thank the Romans. In Pompeii alone, more than 80 thermopolia (literally cook shops) have been found, each one a stone counter with earthenware jars, or dolia, slotted into them to help food and drink stay warm. Often located in marketplaces, they provided a place to grab a quick bite to eat on the go, much like McDonald's or KFC do today.

A Roman thermopolium often sold spiced wine, meats, cheese, fish, lentils and nuts. Classicist and ancient historian Mary Beard has commented that these fast food bars lined the streets in Pompeii – they were the alternative to a meagre diet of bread, cheese and fruit for the poor, as they didn't really have the facilities to cook anything else. While some thermopolia just provided food, others had outdoor seating areas for those who wanted to take their time.



A thermopolium in the ruins of Herculeaneum, Italy



Inside Rome's Pantheon, as painted by Giovanni Paolo Panini c.1734

LARGE-SCALE CONSTRUCTION

The Romans were more innovative than people realise

If there's one thing the Romans are remembered for today, it's their buildings. Palaces and theatres already existed before them, but what the Romans added to architecture was astounding. Amphitheatres were born for the infamous gladiator bouts (which the Romans actually adopted from their Etruscan predecessors). Triumphal arches and columns sprang up all over the empire, commemorating the victories of emperors like Trajan and Titus. Aqueducts carried water to towns and cities that didn't have their own water sources. Hadrian built a wall across northern England as a barrier against the barbarian Picts in modern-day Scotland.

One understated achievement, though, was the Pantheon, which still stands in Rome today. Completed in 125 CE, it is possible that it was the first building ever created where the inside is deliberately designed to outshine the outside. The rotunda stretches 43.2 metres in diameter, and is a perfect hemisphere. At the very top is an 8.8-metre-wide oculus, or opening, and the whole dome is crafted from pumice and concrete. It stands as a testament to Roman architecture and building prowess.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

LAWS

Time to update the legal system?

It seems crazy that we still use laws created over 2,000 years ago, but it's the truth. The Twelve Tables, which is usually cited as the foundation of ancient Roman law, was a heavy influence on the Bill of Rights at the founding of the United States, and both South Africa and San Marino still base their legal systems on the idea of Jus Commune, or civil law. Fragments of the Twelve Tables still survive today, and we can see that it covered family law and torts, both of which are still extant. Rome boasted the world's first advanced legal system, and thanks to its far-reaching influence, it's no wonder that it has affected so many others. Law students today can still study it, and it often helps them to understand our own complex legal system.

DIVVS IVLIVS
CAESAR AVGVSTVS

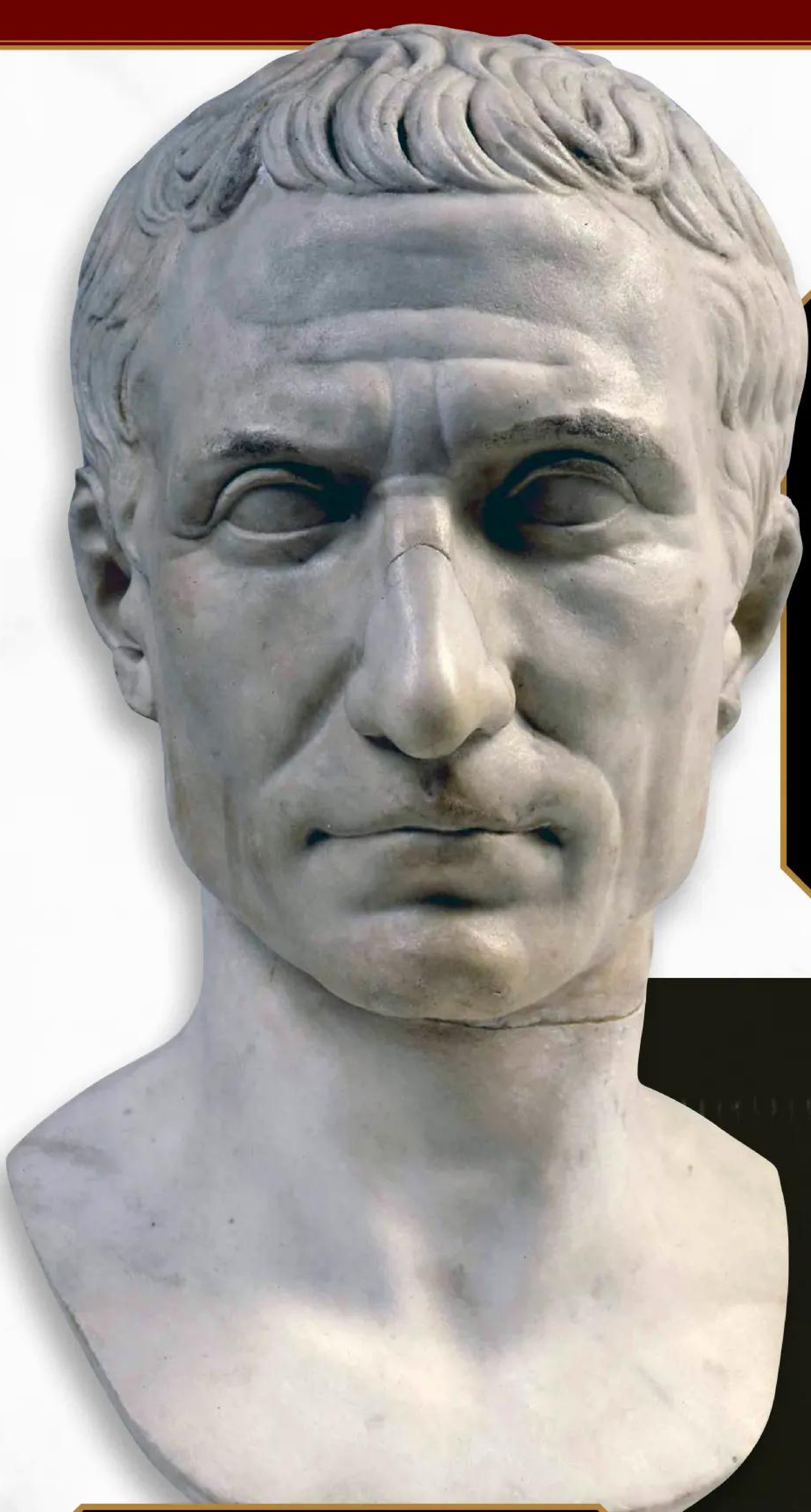
CURRENCY

Roman coins laid the foundation for economic systems across Europe

Did you know that it is thanks to the Romans that we use coins to purchase items today? The Romans began minting their coins around the 4th century BCE and coins were eventually produced in brass, copper, silver and gold. In particular, it was the silver denarius that would become a standard unit of currency throughout the Roman Empire, becoming a widely recognised form of value that could be used to buy goods and services and facilitate trade across the Empire. With coinage introduced by the Romans to many countries, such as Britain during the reign of Emperor Augustus, it would influence the development of later coinage systems across Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire.

In addition to this, Roman coins often depicted a profile image of a ruler, with Julius Caesar becoming the first to produce coins with his own image, differing from earlier trends of depicting ancestors. As a result, coins became a useful form of propaganda that spread the ruler's image across the Empire and legitimised their rule, with many later European coinages adopting the profile laureate bust too.

Roman citizens examining the Twelve Tables after they were first implemented



THE JULIAN CALENDAR

We've got one man to thank for leap years

Calendars already existed by the time Julius Caesar came to power – the Greeks had created their version, while other civilisations had theirs. Rome had its civic calendar, but it was out of sync with nature that Caesar took matter into his own hands to change it. He added one extra day every four years because of a calculation that showed it took 365 and one-quarter days for Earth to go around the Sun, not 365. So it was that the so-called Julian calendar had created leap years. However, the calculations were slightly off – it actually takes us a further 11.5 minutes to go around the Sun each year, so Caesar's calendar was over-correcting to the tune of eight days each millennium. This was finally fixed in the 16th century with the introduction of the Gregorian calendar, named after Pope Gregory XIII, but the idea of leap years stayed. Unfortunately for historians, different countries adopted it at different times, making it very confusing to date some events.

SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

The Romans changed religion across Europe forever

It was the Romans who played a crucial role in the spread of Christianity across Europe. The efficiency of the well-connected empire, with its established road system across Europe, facilitated the spread of Christianity across the Empire as missionaries, such as Paul the Apostle, travelled along them to Britain, Germany and other countries to spread their message. However, Christianity really began to flourish following the conversion of Emperor Constantine in 312 CE, with the Edict of Milan – which established tolerance for Christianity across the Roman Empire, ending persecution against Christians and recognising it as a legal religion – introduced the following year. Roman Catholicism continued to spread even after the Western Roman Empire fell in 476 CE, becoming a stabilising influence across the continent and becoming an integral part of European culture.

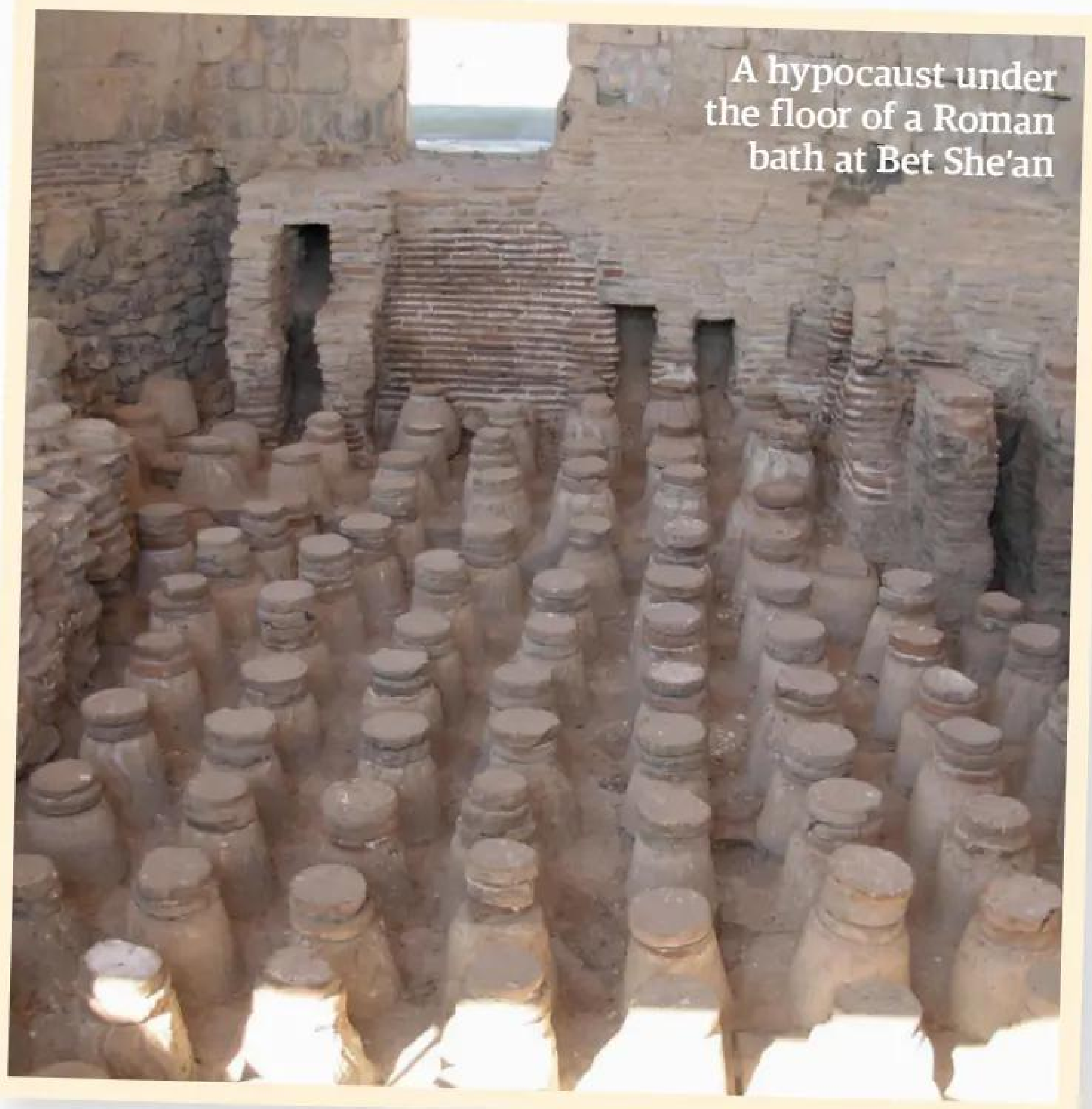
Constantine's conversion to Christianity was a turning point for religion across the Empire

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

CENTRAL HEATING

Keeping your house warm isn't a new idea

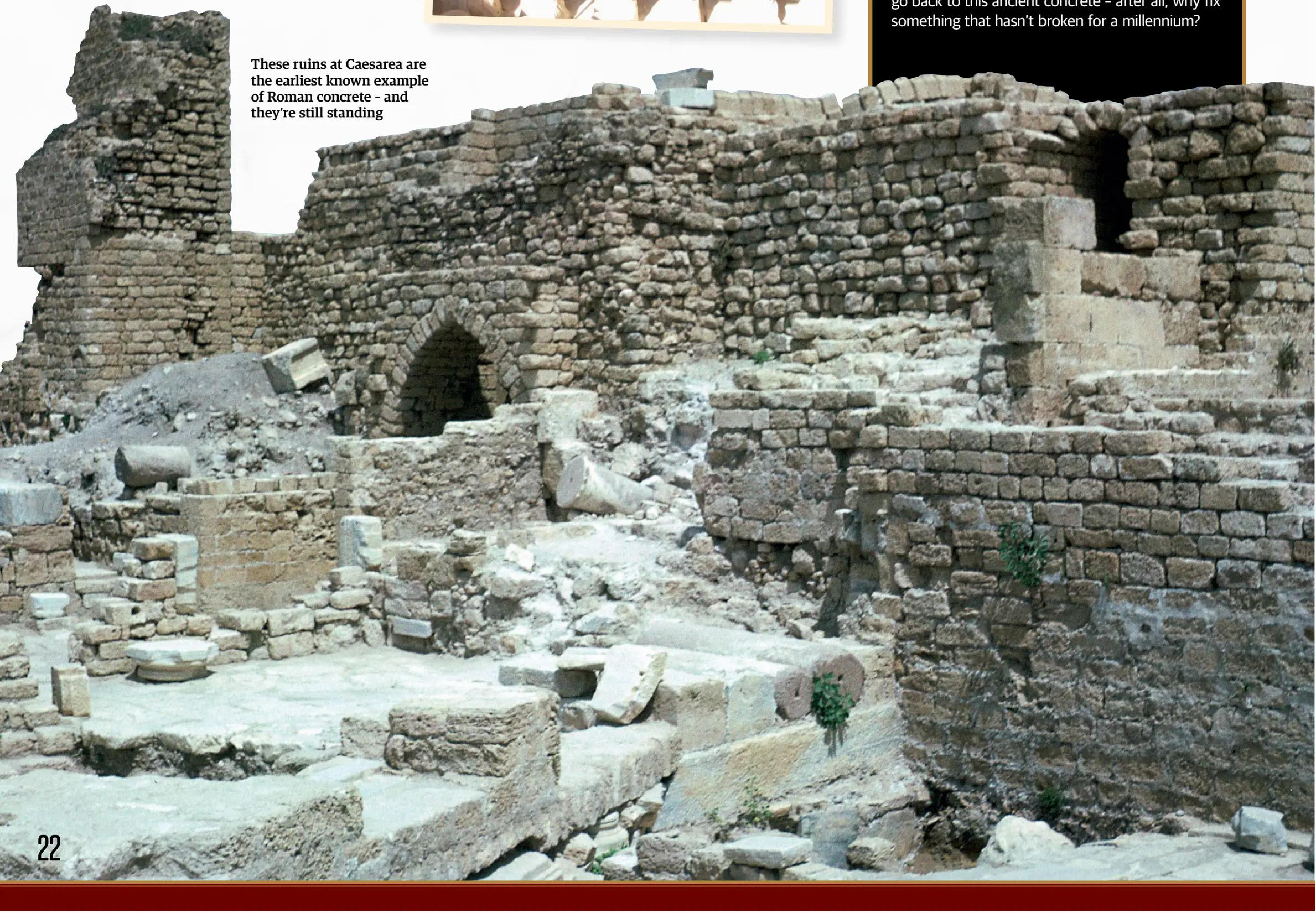
How to keep warm in the Roman Empire? With central heating, of course. The Romans were pioneers, and they invented an ingenious way to keep their buildings warm with underfloor heating. A fire or furnace heated the air below the floor in a room, and the air then escaped up the walls. Under the ground floor was a basement hypocaust, which saw stacks of terracotta tiles piled up in a bed of concrete. Baths across the Roman Empire used this method to heat their hot rooms, or caldaria, and houses in the northern provinces employed it to keep them warm in the colder winter months. The rooms that needed the most heat would be placed closest to the furnace, but it was by no means a cheap option. Only the wealthy could really afford it as it required skilled engineers to build it, and slave labour and copious amounts of fuel to keep the furnaces burning. When the Western Roman Empire fell, central heating in the western provinces fell out of use – it's only been in the past 100 years or so that it has come back.


A hypocaust under the floor of a Roman bath at Bet She'an

CONCRETE

The reason 2,00-year-old structures are still standing

It may not be the most interesting item on this list, but its importance can't be overstated: Roman concrete was nothing short of fantastic. While our concrete has a lifespan of about 50 years before it begins crumbling, the Roman version has lasted for over 1,000 years and is still going strong. Made to a recipe whipped up by the architect and engineer Marcus Vitruvius around 30 BCE, it's comprised of volcanic ash, lime and seawater, all mixed together with volcanic rocks and spread into wooden moulds, before being plunged into more seawater. While concrete was used for buildings, it was also used to create piers and harbour walls for one very important reason: it got stronger over time. As seawater reacted with the volcanic ash, it created new minerals that reinforced it. It's for this reason that people have recently started suggesting that we should go back to this ancient concrete – after all, why fix something that hasn't broken for a millennium?


These ruins at Caesarea are the earliest known example of Roman concrete – and they're still standing

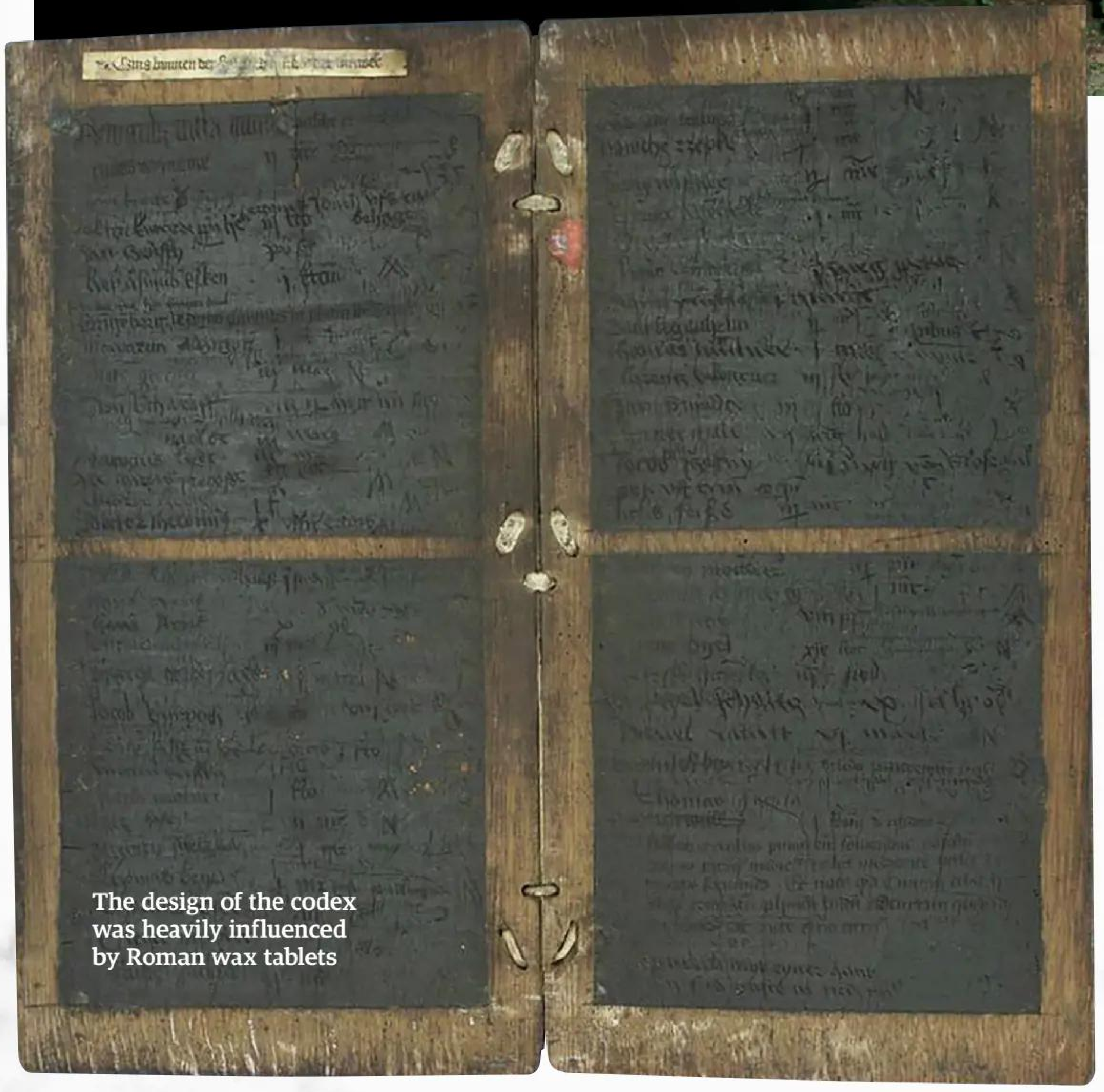
SANITATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Keeping clean was an important task

While the Romans weren't the first to build sewers in Rome – that credit goes to the Etruscans – the Romans were happy to take them over and keep them in use, even building their own in the city and beyond. But contrary to popular belief, Roman sewers weren't to do with sanitisation; they removed water from the streets to prevent flooding. The Romans also had public toilets; dank and dirty, they weren't pleasant to use, but they served in a pinch. Unlike toilets at home, these were connected to the sewers.
But the most impressive example of public health comes from the Roman baths. Situated in most towns and cities, it was the weekly, or sometimes daily, trips to the thermae that kept Roman citizens clean. A trip included traipsing around rooms of different temperatures and a good scrub, and an exercise ground was attached. This could perhaps be the precursor of the modern gym, with its exercise rooms, swimming pool and sometimes steam rooms and saunas.

© Getty Images

The remains of sewers beneath the Roman forum



The design of the codex was heavily influenced by Roman wax tablets

BOOKS

The Romans probably created the first page-turners

We wouldn't necessarily have recognised Roman books as books. Until around the 1st century BCE they were papyrus scrolls that measured anything from 4.5 to 16 metres in length, but they were difficult to read properly and in colder climates they tended to deteriorate. So a new book was created: the codex. A codex had pages, with text running from the front to the back, and these pages were made from parchment. Invented by the Greeks a few centuries prior, parchment was ideal to write on. These pages were then bound between wooden covers, and they could hold more information than the scrolls. It was now easier to disseminate a hefty amount of information in one go, and these new books would last much longer than their predecessors.
But that wasn't the only Roman innovation to do with writing – they've also been credited with creating the first newspaper. Acta Diurna, or Daily Events, was also made from papyrus and distributed around Rome so that citizens could keep up to date with weddings, births, deaths, crimes, trials and even the adventures of the rich and famous. Newspapers today haven't really changed that much.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

c.800-1050

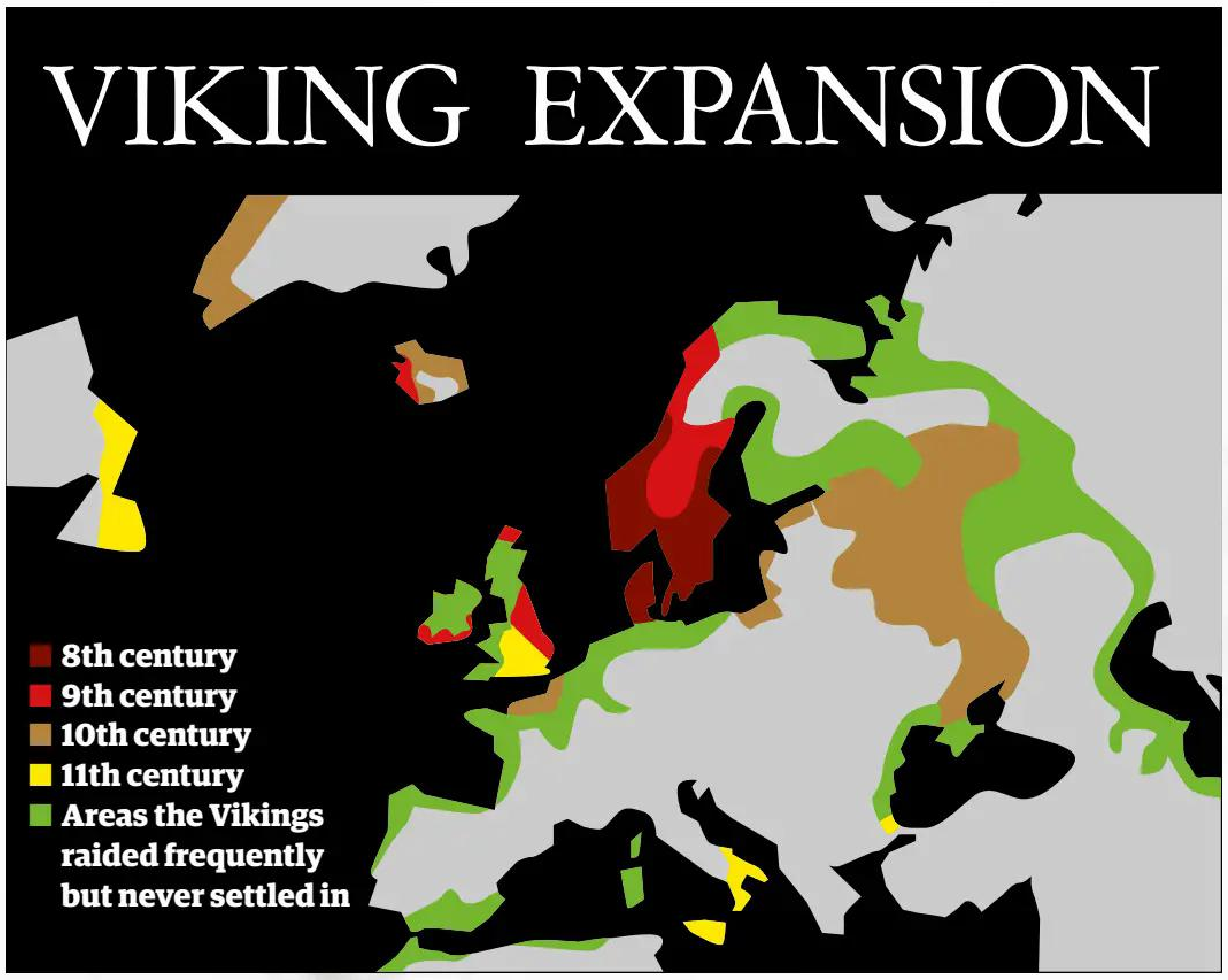
LOST KINGDOMS OF THE VIKINGS

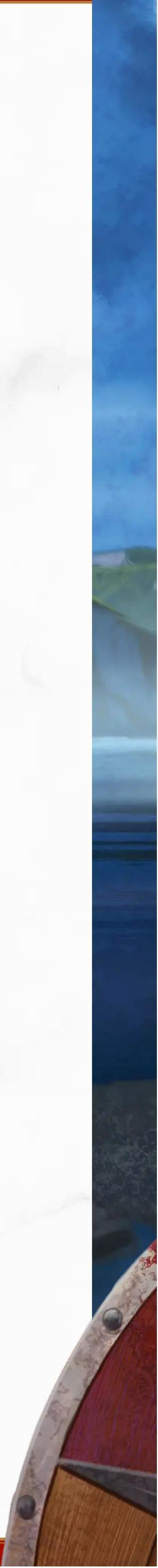
From Ireland to Constantinople, the Norse raiders pillaged and plundered the known world in search of treasure and territory

Written by Jack Griffiths

Often portrayed as bloodthirsty raiders, the Vikings were a civilisation that travelled to more of the Early Medieval world than anyone else. Originating from Scandinavia, they branched out into mainland Europe to find food, land and riches, establishing kingdoms across the known world. For hundreds of years a fleet of longships on the horizon struck fear into the hearts of European peoples like the Franks, Saxons and Byzantines. The men from the north were traders as well as raiders, though, and commerce helped fund their lengthy expeditions. Bringing with them fur, wool and whalebone, they traded their goods for silver, silk and spices, which they then sold on. To trade or raid? It all hinged on the best way to make profit.

The Vikings are perhaps most famous for their attacks on the British Isles, the forced establishment of the Danelaw and battles against Alfred the Great. However, they sailed their longships all across Europe and ruled over many diverse lands. They even made forays into parts of Asia, America and Africa. From Newfoundland in the west to Kiev in the east, the Norsemen braved treacherous oceans and faced deadly adversaries. They may have seemed like savages, but it's the Norsemen we have to thank for the establishment and development of many of the European kingdoms that flourished after their decline.





IRELAND

For more than 200 years the Vikings exerted influence over vast swathes of the Emerald Isle

Norwegian Norsemen first appeared in Ireland at the end of the 8th century with a hit-and-run attack on a monastery on either Rathlin or Lambay Island. These sporadic coastal attacks continued for 30 years, and despite later spreading to the mainland, actually had no great effect on the Irish settlements that would rebuild during the lulls in fighting. At this stage, the marauders were content with staging assaults that lasted no longer than a few days before returning to Scandinavia to sell their spoils. At the start of the next century, however, the Vikings grew in confidence and the pillaging intensified. Ship enclosures (known as longphorts) were established in Dublin, and these fixed positions allowed the raiders to ravage the countryside at will.

It wasn't long until Irish kings had had enough. The king of Tara, Máel Seachnaill, took the fight back to the Vikings, and near Skreen in County Meath, killed no less than 700 Nordic raiders.

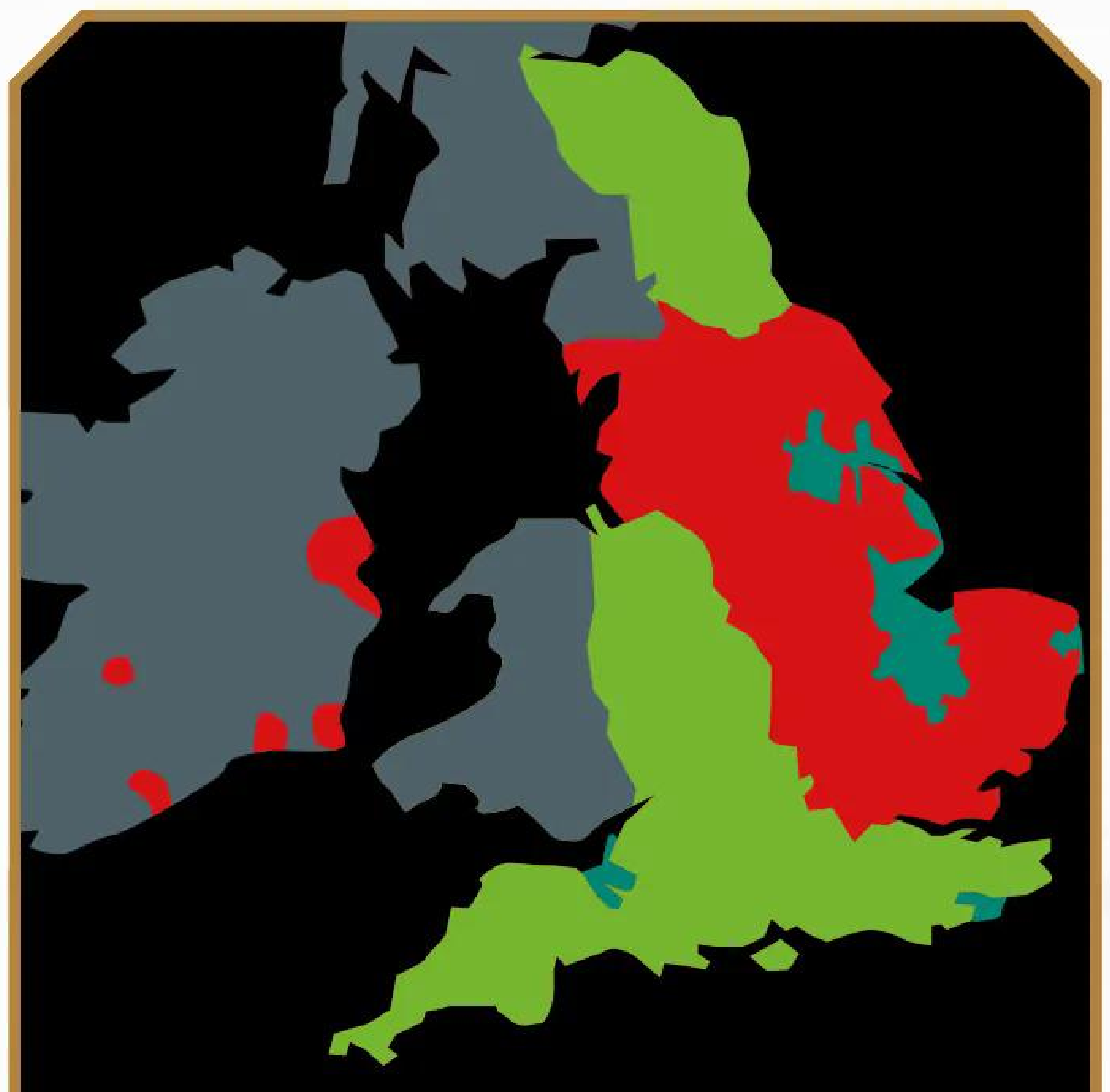
The increase in assaults had a profound effect on the Celtic-Irish society for more than two centuries. Norse-Irish alliances became common, but by the start of the 10th century, Vikings from Denmark were added to the mix. To differentiate, Vikings from Norway were known as the 'Lochlainn' and the Danish Norsemen as the 'Danair'. The Viking success on the British Isles only increased the number of attacks, and in the years leading up to 1000, they tactically used their longships to travel up rivers and attack further inland. The Norwegians dominated initially, financed by all the monasteries they plundered, but the disorganised nature of their attacks meant the Danes' power base grew steadily.

On the Irish side, one man rose above the others, the king of Munster, Brian Boru. With his support base in the southern kingdom, Brian assembled a unified confederate army, which imposed itself as the major force in the region. The army destroyed Dublin's fortress, allied with many of the Viking leaders and was even powerful enough to expel several Norse clans from Ireland entirely. Brian claimed kingship in league with the Dublin Norse, and no one dared challenge him. His supremacy lasted until 1012, when a series of intense Viking attacks culminated in the critical Battle of Clontarf in 1014.

Taking place on 23 April, Clontarf was a battle between the majority of the Irish kingdoms led by Brian against Vikings supported by Máel Mórda, the king of Leinster, who had switched allegiances after a dispute. Brian had approximately 7,000 troops at his disposal, and they marched to Dublin to engage 4,000 Leinster men and 3,000 Norsemen who had landed on the shoreline at sunrise. As the armies brawled, Mórda's men scored an early advantage as his vicious Viking centre proved devastatingly effective. The pendulum swung in the other direction, however, when the Viking champions Brodir and Sigurd were defeated. As afternoon came, Brian's men managed to cut off the Viking access to their longships. This was a critical blow to Morda's forces, who began to flee towards the one bridge over the nearby River Liffey to safety. As they tried to escape, the returning Máel Seachnaill and his men emerged and cut off access to the bridge. The Vikings and the Leinster men were now trapped and subsequently routed.

Historic Viking settlements can be easily identified by '-by' and '-thorpe' suffixes, which in Old Norse meant homestead and farm. Therefore, cities and towns such as Derby, Grimsby, Whitby and Scunthorpe were once Nordic settlements

The battle was the bloodiest single conflict in ancient Irish history. Brian lay dead in the mud with 4,000 of his own men and, crucially, 6,000 Leinster men and Vikings lay slaughtered alongside them. The battle resulted in the end of a period of great turmoil in Ireland and initiated a time of relative peace in which the Irish and the remaining Vikings lived together. The Norsemen who stayed in Ireland were absorbed into Irish culture and started to intermarry. The Danish kingdom of Dublin had stood for more than 200 years prior to Clontarf, but just 52 years later, Harald Hardrada would lose at Stamford Bridge and the great Viking age of the British Isles would be over.

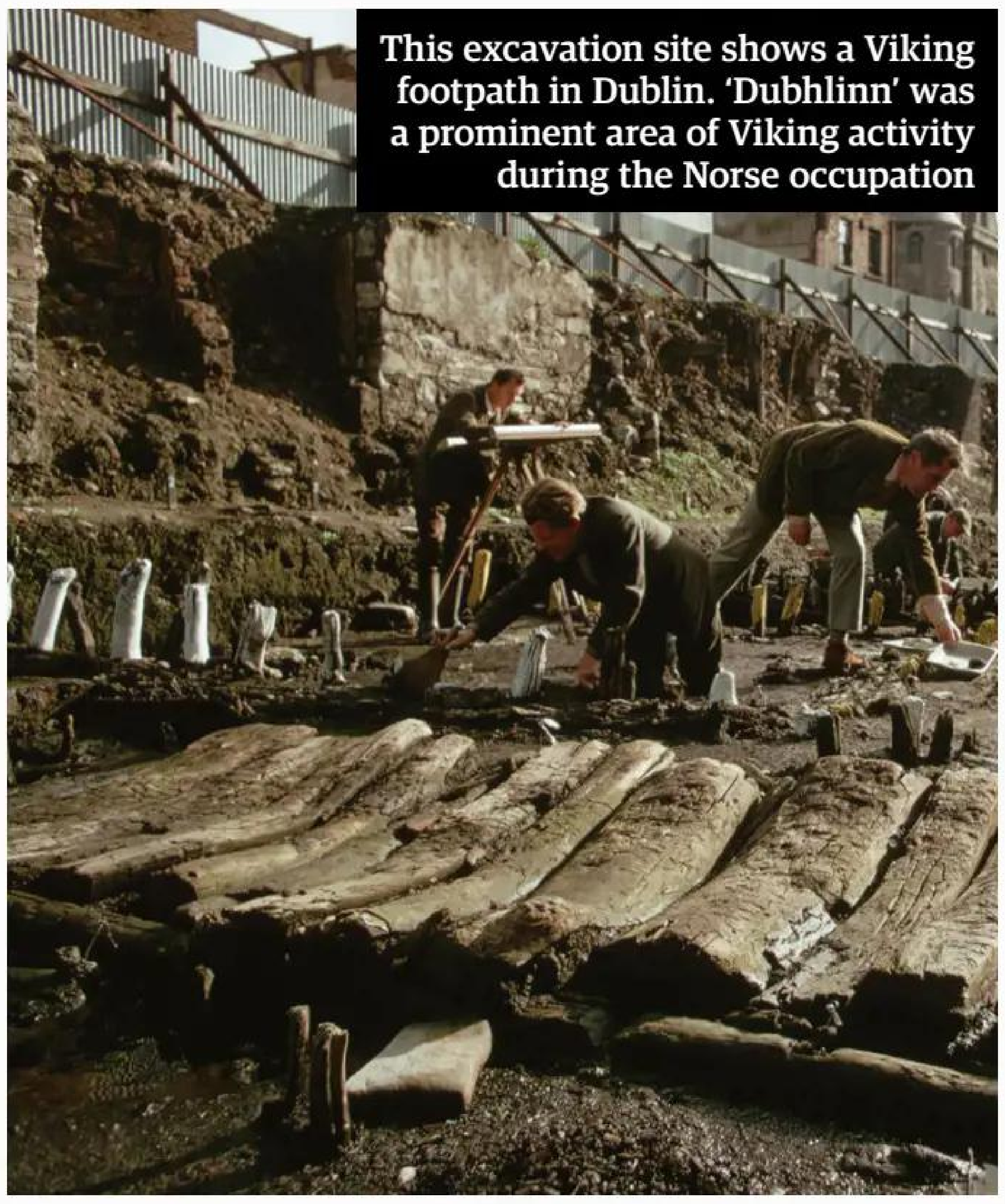


🟩 **English territory** 🟥 **Danish or Norse territory**
▨ **Celtic lands** 🟦 **Swamp**

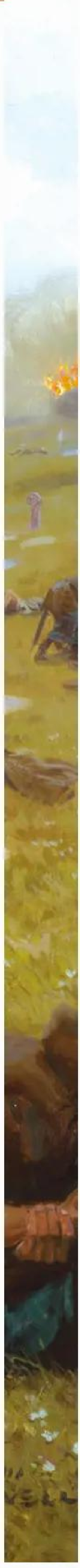
VIKINGS IN THE BRITISH ISLES

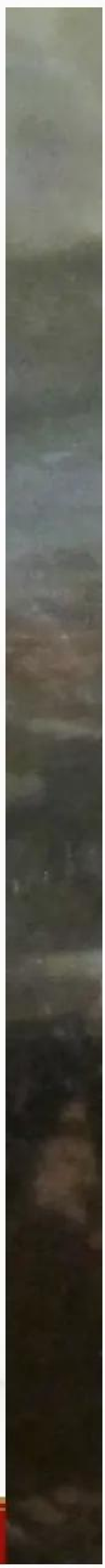
The areas of Viking conquest that became known as the Danelaw

The first significant Viking attack on the British Isles was in 793, when the Vikings carried out a brutal raid on the island monastery of Lindisfarne. The almost constant assaults on Britain's coastline over the next few centuries were too much for the Anglo-Saxons and Celts, who surrendered a vast swathe of land to the Norse raiders.



This excavation site shows a Viking footpath in Dublin. 'Dubhlinn' was a prominent area of Viking activity during the Norse occupation





THE THEORIES BEHIND THE VIKING EXPANSION

Exhausted farmland

Scandinavia has a variety of landscapes but none were ideal for farming. Norway was too mountainous, Sweden had extensive forests, while Denmark could be too sandy.

Desire for treasure

Searching far-off lands for plunder is something the Vikings became associated with. Raids were carried out overseas and a settlement would be built to cement their claim to the loot.

Overcrowding

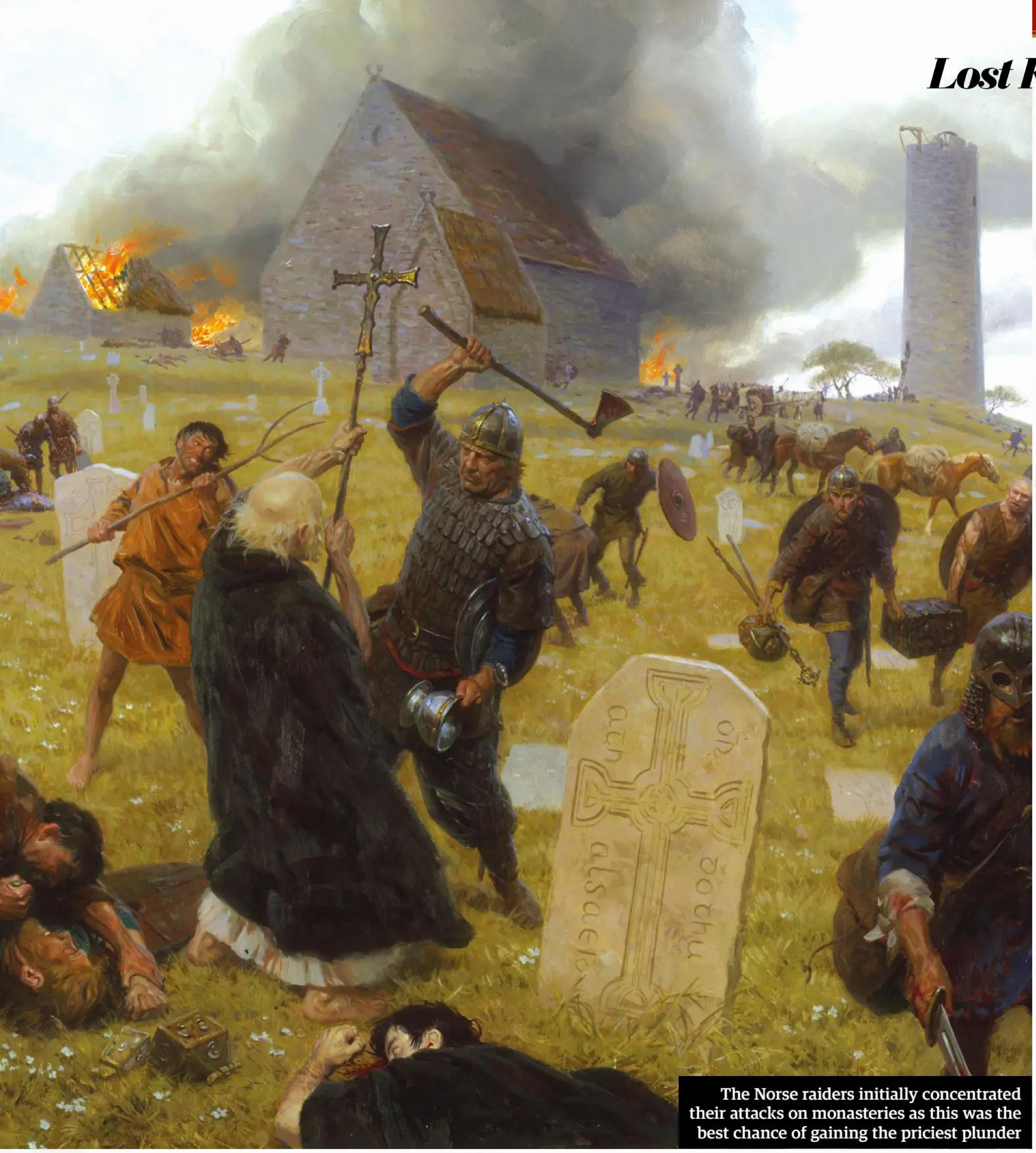
As the Viking population swelled, many sought to move elsewhere. The eldest son inherited family lands, so younger brothers would venture in search of territory to call their own.

Wanderlust

A sense of adventure was a common Viking trait. Even when the treasure dried up, the Norsemen were keen to seek out new lands in far-off places like America and Constantinople.

New trade routes

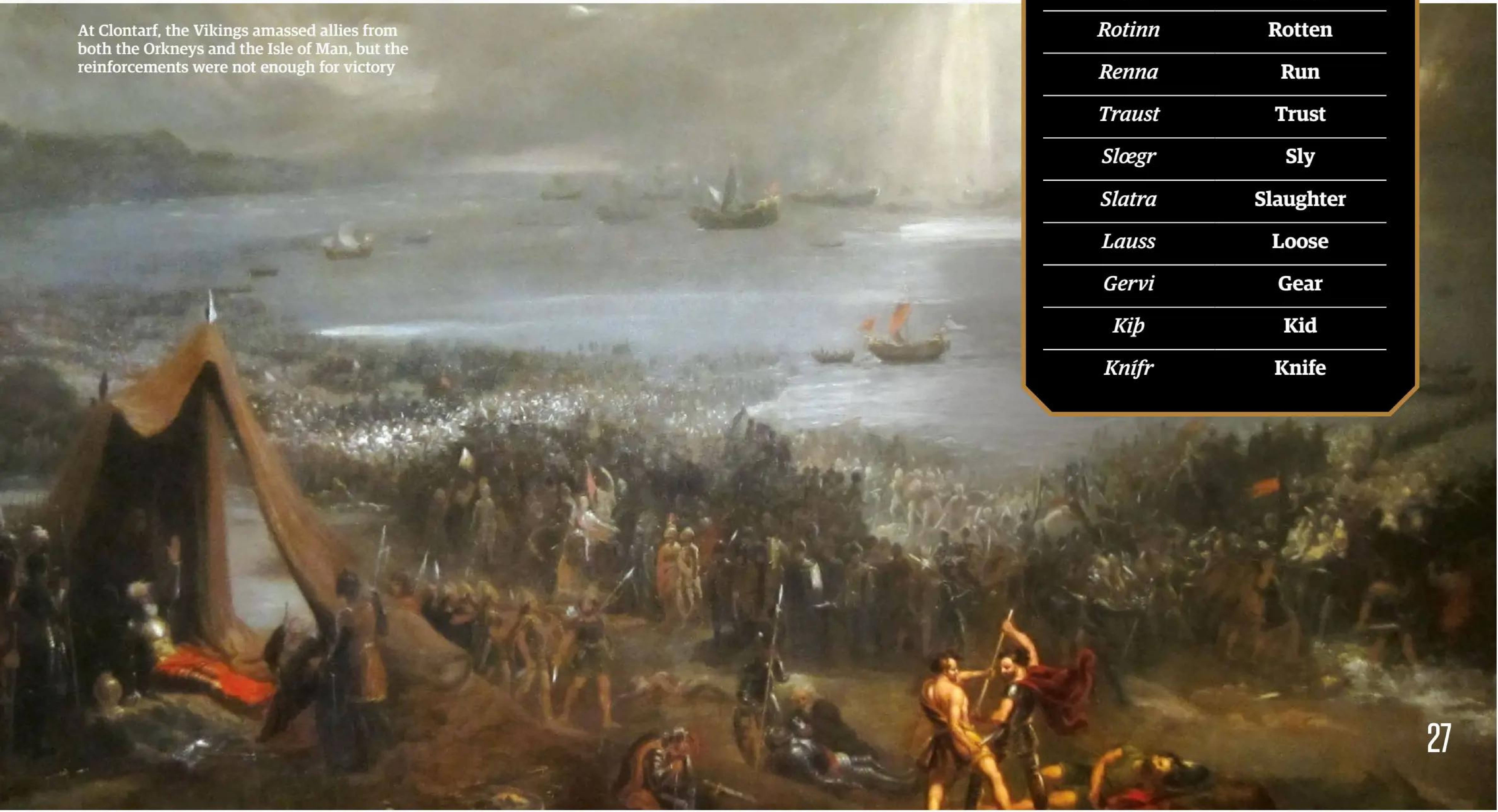
The popularity of Christianity meant that many of the nearby Christian kingdoms refused to trade. As a result, the pagan Vikings would either invade the lands or look elsewhere.



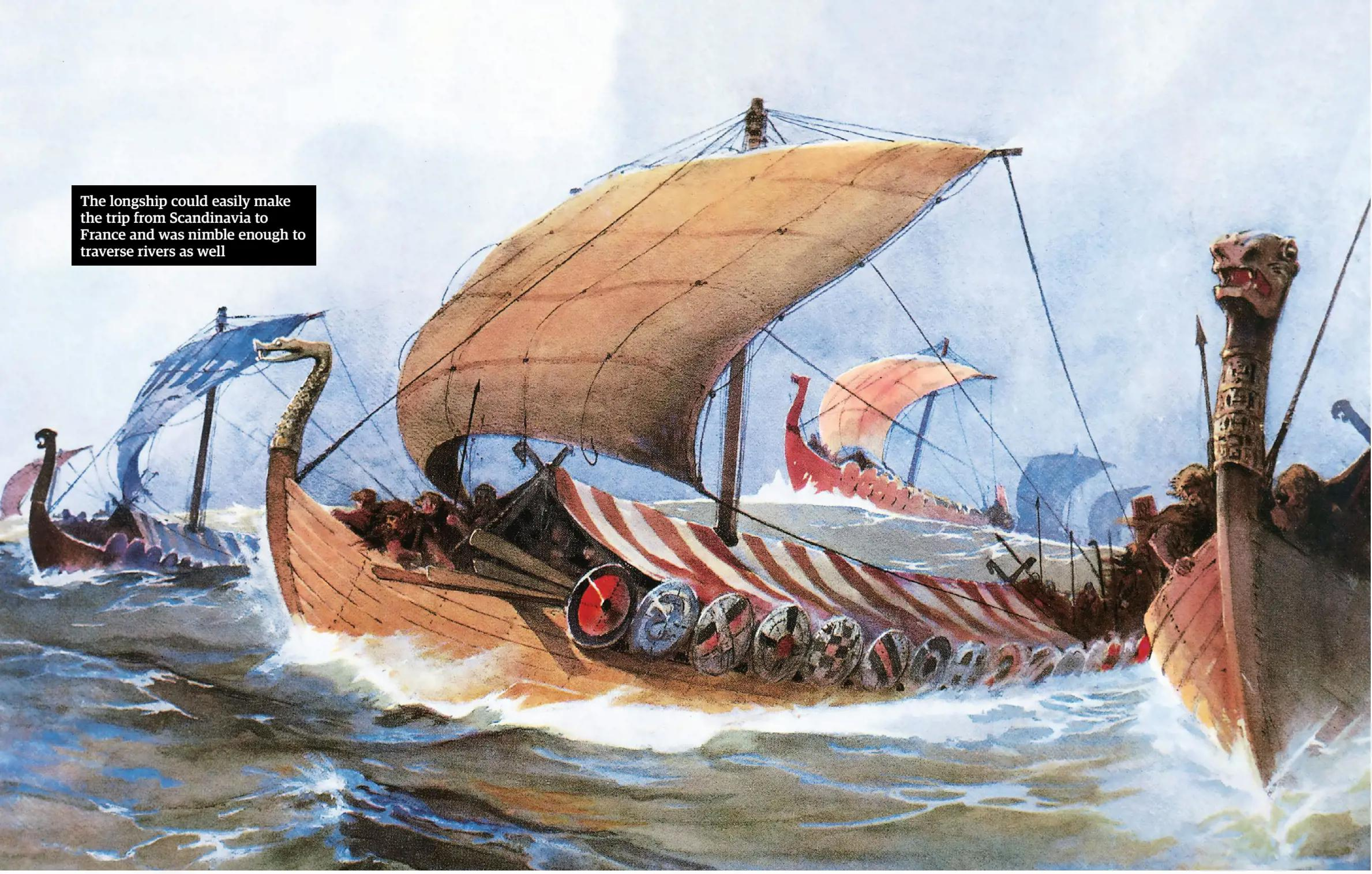
The Norse raiders initially concentrated their attacks on monasteries as this was the best chance of gaining the priciest plunder

NORSE WORDS THAT INVADED THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Old Norse	Modern English
Sala	**Sale**
Klubba	**Club**
Beit	**Snack**
Rannsaka	**Ransack**
Fiall	**Hill**
Berserkr	**Berserk**
Hloppa	**Flea**
Burðr	**Birth**
Kalla	**Call**
Kasta	**Cast**
Krafla	**Crawl**
Hús bóndi	**Husband**
Leggr	**Leg**
Uggr	**Ugly**
Rotinn	**Rotten**
Renna	**Run**
Traust	**Trust**
Slœgr	**Sly**
Slatra	**Slaughter**
Lauss	**Loose**
Gervi	**Gear**
Kiþ	**Kid**
Knífr	**Knife**

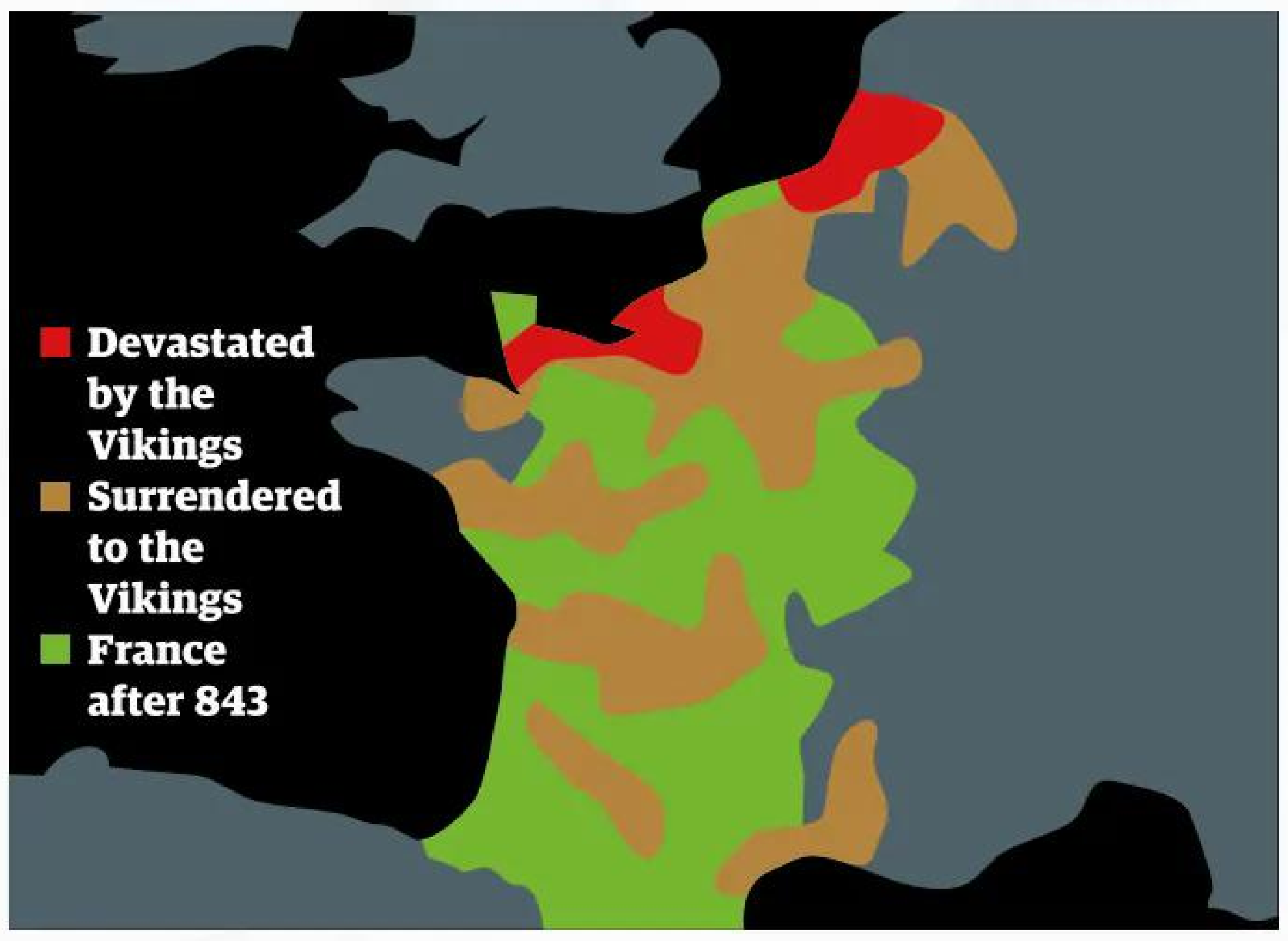


At Clontarf, the Vikings amassed allies from both the Orkneys and the Isle of Man, but the reinforcements were not enough for victory


The longship could easily make the trip from Scandinavia to France and was nimble enough to traverse rivers as well

FRANCE

Across the Channel, Vikings threatened the Franks in Normandy, Brittany and Aquitaine



By the end of the 9th century, Vikings from Denmark had increased the amount of coastal assaults on Western Europe and would proceed to populate significant amounts of territory in Normandy, Brittany and Aquitaine. Their leader, Reginherus or Ragnar, thought by some to be the legendary figure Ragnar Lodbrok described in Old Norse poetry, had the confidence and the audacity to siege Paris in 845.

Ragnar led an army of 120 longships and 5,000 warriors – fierce men who had already scorched the earth all over Europe. After plundering Rouen, the siege of Paris began on 28 March. Although the attackers were stopped in their tracks by a plague that spread through the camp, they still managed to take the city, and were only stopped from burning it to the ground by a last-ditch Frankish ransom of 7,000 pounds of silver.

Despite being primarily Danish territory, a Norwegian leader emerged by the name of Hrölfr, or, as he is more commonly known, Rollo. Already a veteran of conflicts on the British Isles, his military forces besieged the city of Chartres, forcing the king of the Franks, Charles III, to sign the Treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte in 911, granting Rollo feudal rights in the area around Rouen.

Viking land now stretched from Normandy in the north to Aquitaine in the south, and remained under Viking control for about two centuries. Even though they had foreign invaders in their lands, this was actually of benefit to the Franks as it meant the Norsemen would effectively provide them with a buffer zone against coastal invasions from other enemies of the realm.

It was not long until Christianity and Frankish customs started to take over from Nordic culture. Rollo himself was baptised and the Normans that invaded England in 1066 were descendants of the Normandy Vikings. The Medieval French word for a Scandinavian is 'Normand', a term that was then given to the area (Normandy) and the people that inhabited it (Normans). Harald Hardrada may have been defeated at Stamford Bridge, but William the Conqueror's forces that were victorious at Hastings were more Norse than many think.

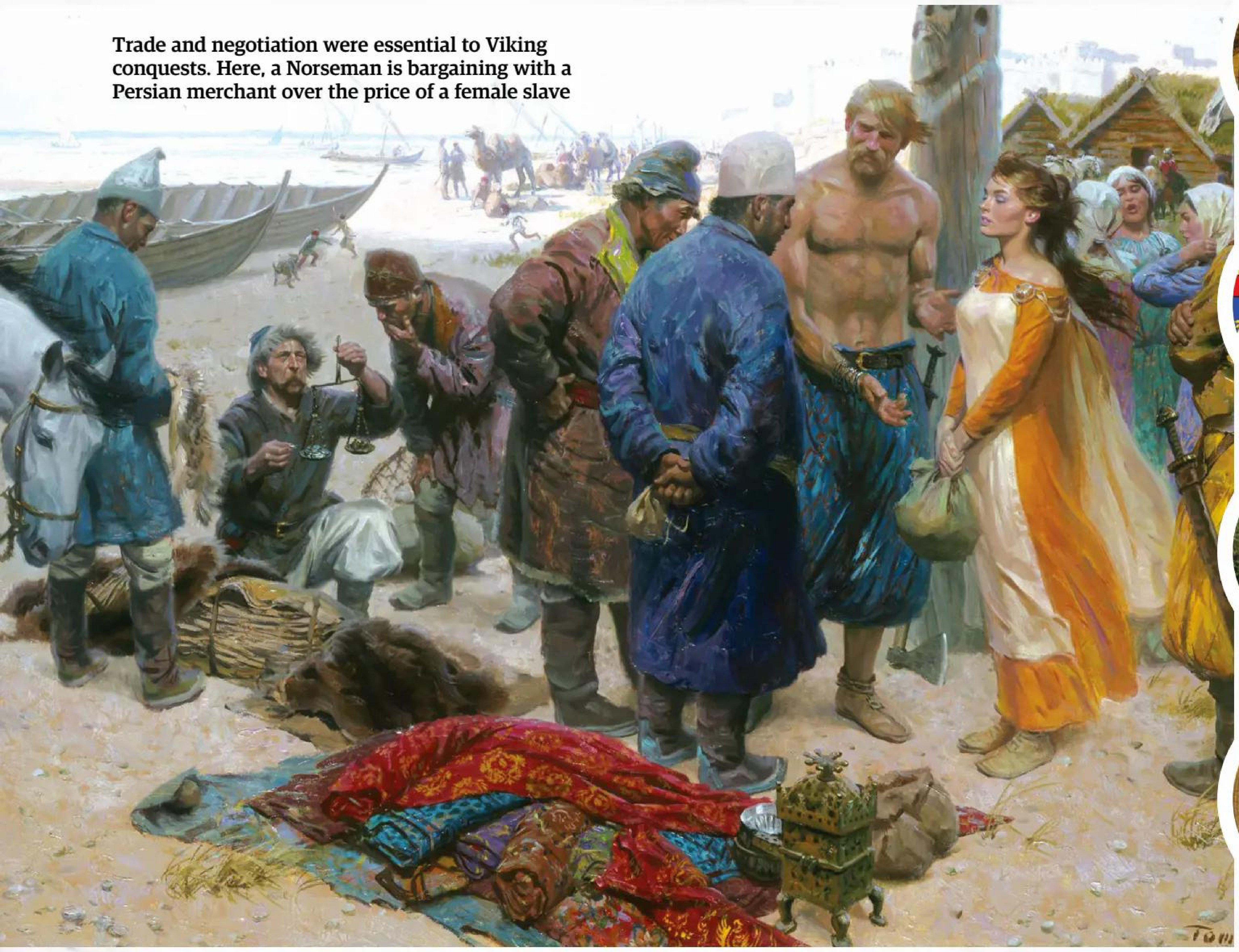
RUSSIA & EASTERN EUROPE

Using the river systems of the Baltic to their advantage, the Vikings travelled east for further trade and conquest

One of the greatest Viking achievements is perhaps their foray deep into Eastern Europe. In the 9th century, the Slavic tribes in Russia and Eastern Europe were fast becoming exhausted by constant inter-tribal wars that were stretching their resources and affecting their commerce. Capitalising on the broken alliances, the Viking ships arrived from the Gulf of Finland in huge numbers. Using large rivers such as the Volga, Neva and Volkhov as waterways, the men from the north vastly expanded their territory.

The town of Novgorod on the banks of Lake Ilmen became one of the main strongholds for the Nordic invaders, who were known as the 'Rus'. The East European plain provided the Vikings with forest and grassland that was ideal for hunting, fishing and farming. The plentiful food supply helped trade routes expand further northwards towards Lake Ladoga and southwards down the River Dnieper. The Rus people traded with local Slavic tribes and travelled into modern-day Russia, helping give the nation its name in the process. The three Swedish kings who came from overseas were Rurik, Sineus and Truvor, who settled in Novgorod, Beloozerg and Izborsk. Rurik's son, Oleg of Novgorod, travelled 600 miles south to take control of Kiev in 882 and went on to pillage lands even further southwards, knocking on the door of the Byzantine Empire in the process.

Like many of the areas that the Vikings inhabited, their influence steadily declined and was replaced by local customs. This happened once again in Eastern Europe as the Russian identity began to become distinct from Norse. One of the kings of Kiev, Vladimir, took the decision to make Greek Orthodox the area's religion in 988, decreasing the impact and relevance of Viking paganism even further. The culture change of the Norse people to more Slavic customs resulted in the growth of a Russian dynasty that rivalled the Carolingian Empire in Western Europe. The founders of the Russian tsardom were descendants of the Rurik Dynasty, a Viking dynasty that became one of Europe's oldest royal houses.



Trade and negotiation were essential to Viking conquests. Here, a Norseman is bargaining with a Persian merchant over the price of a female slave

SEVEN OTHER TRAVELLING CIVILISATIONS

Normans

Well known for their lands in France and England, the Normans were descendants of the Vikings. A realm was established in Sicily and southern Italy in the 10th century and the Norman people also established states in North Africa and even as far east in what is now Lebanon.

Phoenicians

To the Mediterranean what the Vikings were to the north Atlantic, the Phoenicians were one of the finest trading civilisations of the ancient world. The most powerful city-states were Sidon and Tyre, which became almost too tough for Alexander the Great to conquer.

Venetian Republic

One of the finest nautical trading powers of all time, Venice was the greatest seaport in Late Medieval Europe. The Venetians were excellent shipbuilders thanks to the marshy lagoon in which they lived. The Republic controlled states such as Istria and Dalmatia until its decline and fall in the Napoleonic era.

Genoese Republic

Venice's rival in chief, Genoa benefited from a natural harbour that led to the Ligurian Sea. Its booming maritime economy allowed it to be an independent republic for 800 years. Genoa's trade helped the West in the Crusades and had links as far away as Crimea before losing ground to Venice.

Kalmar Union

In many ways the successor to the Vikings in Scandinavia, the people of the Kalmar Union were great travellers. The kingdoms of Denmark, Norway and Sweden were incorporated under one crown with Copenhagen as the capital. The Union also incorporated Iceland and Greenland.

Srivijaya

Another civilisation that based its power on sea trade, the Srivijaya Empire prospered between the 7th and 13th centuries. In its heyday, the civilisation had trade links with India, China and the Malay Archipelago. Their power waned after attacks by the Chola and Malayu people.

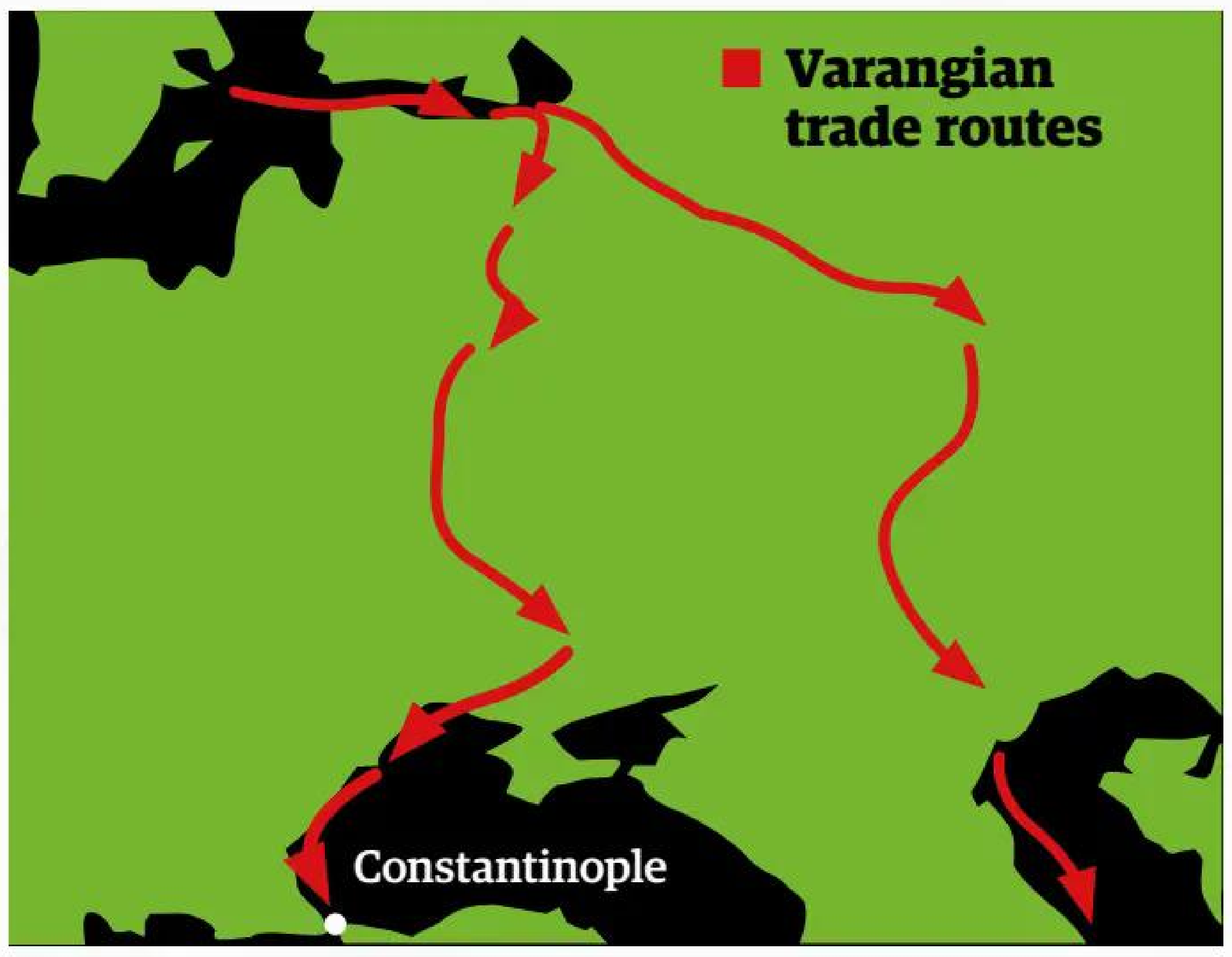
Abbāsid Caliphate

After overthrowing the Umayyad Caliphate in 750, the Abbāsid Dynasty became the strongest empire in Asia Minor and northern Africa until the Mongols in 1258. The caliphate presided over the 'Golden Age of Islam' as Muslim merchants traded in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean.

Images: Dorindavidaurel (Phoenicians), Alain Thebault (Kalmar Union), PHGCOM (Abbāsid Caliphate), Anandajoti (Srivijaya) CC BY-SA 3.0

CONSTANTINOPLE

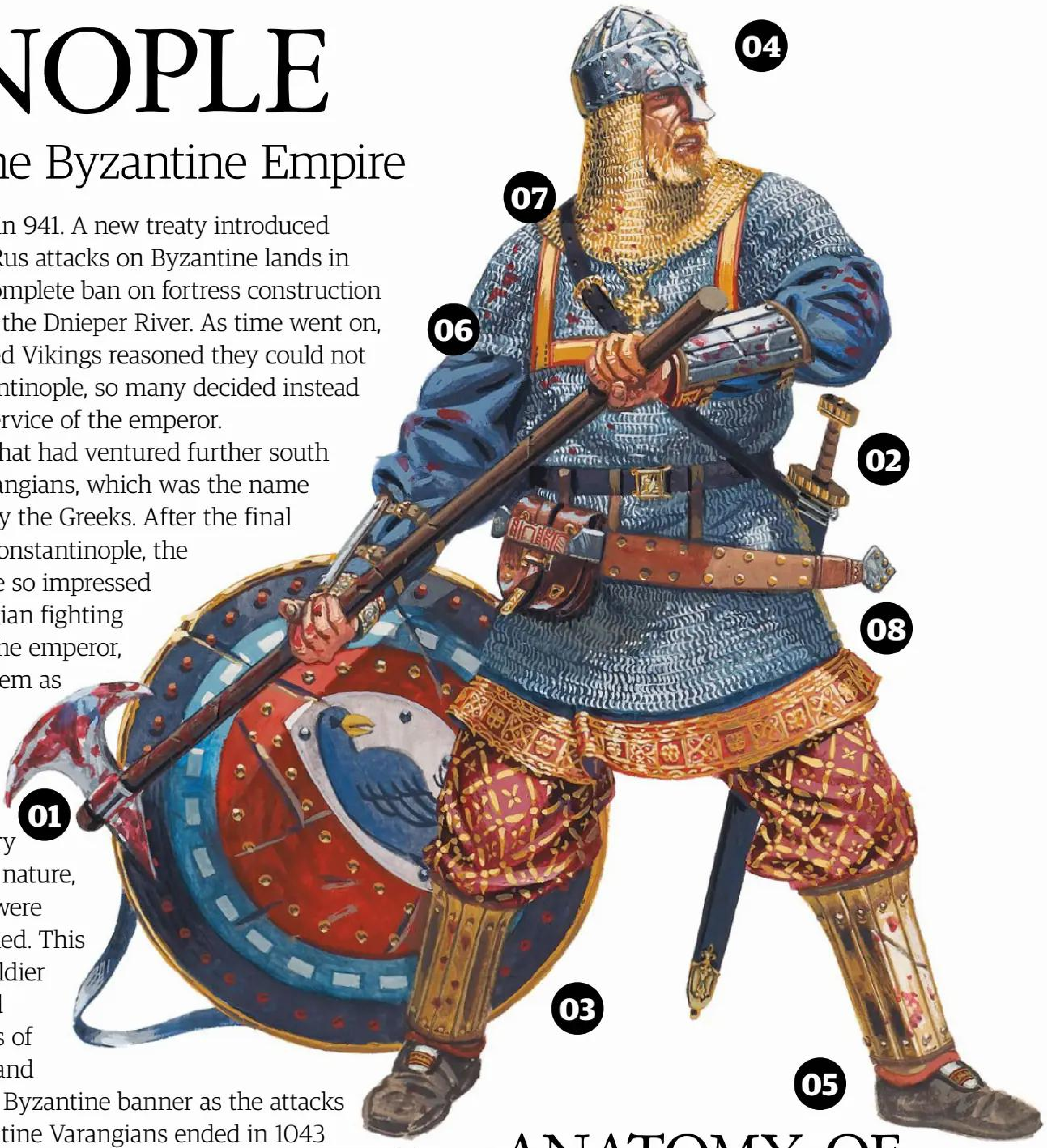
The Vikings venture to the gates of the Byzantine Empire



Viking lands were growing ever southwards, and by the early 10th century, an encounter with the Byzantine Empire was imminent. The movement came to a head in 860 during the siege of Constantinople, as a flotilla of 200 Viking warships emerged from the darkness and headed for the city they knew as 'Miklagard' (the Great City). After this, accounts become quite hazy, but the most likely outcome is the Vikings could only conquer the suburbs and not the fortified inner city without siege equipment. Determined to plunder the wealth of what was the biggest city the Vikings had ever seen, assaults continued, eventually resulting in the 2 September 911 commercial trading treaty. This brought friendly relations between the two states and frequent trade across the Black Sea as the Vikings took control of the Volga Trade Route from the Baltic Sea to the north and the Caspian Sea to the south. By 944, the relations soured, and Oleg's successor, Igor of Kiev, led an unsuccessful campaign against the Byzantines in 941. A new treaty introduced restrictions on Rus attacks on Byzantine lands in Crimea and a complete ban on fortress construction at the mouth of the Dnieper River. As time went on, the overstretched Vikings reasoned they could not conquer Constantinople, so many decided instead to go into the service of the emperor.

The Vikings that had ventured further south were called Varangians, which was the name given to them by the Greeks. After the final failed siege of Constantinople, the Byzantines were so impressed with the Varangian fighting mentality that the emperor, Basil II, hired them as warriors as part of his personal guard in 988. The Byzantine military was very multicultural in nature, so Viking men were warmly welcomed. This new breed of soldier travelled far and wide to the likes of Syria, Armenia and Sicily under the Byzantine banner as the attacks from non-Byzantine Varangians ended in 1043 after the Rus-Byzantine War. The loss signalled the end of the Varangian advance towards Asia as the area became either Slavic or Byzantine, not Norse. The Varangian Guard soldiered on until the 14th century, though, ensuring that there were still some Vikings standing in Constantinople.

Constantinople had 12 miles of walls, so even the Vikings had almost no hope of besieging it



ANATOMY OF A VARANGIAN GUARD

The fearsome warriors who became the most brutal bodyguards of the age

01 Axe

Wielding a foot-long bladed axe, when the Varangian guards arrived, the Byzantine emperor's presence on the battlefield was confirmed.

02 Weaponry

Double-edged swords and spears would also be used if an axe wasn't available, or it was favourable for the conditions of battle.

03 Shield

Shields would be in the classic Viking round style and would be worn on the back when warriors were wielding a two-handed weapon.

04 Helmet

Varangian guards wore an iron conical helmet but were also happy to don a headdress instead in the hot Mediterranean weather.

05 Boots

Tough leather boots were covered by greaves or leg guards to protect the lower legs from hacks and slashes.

06 Clothing

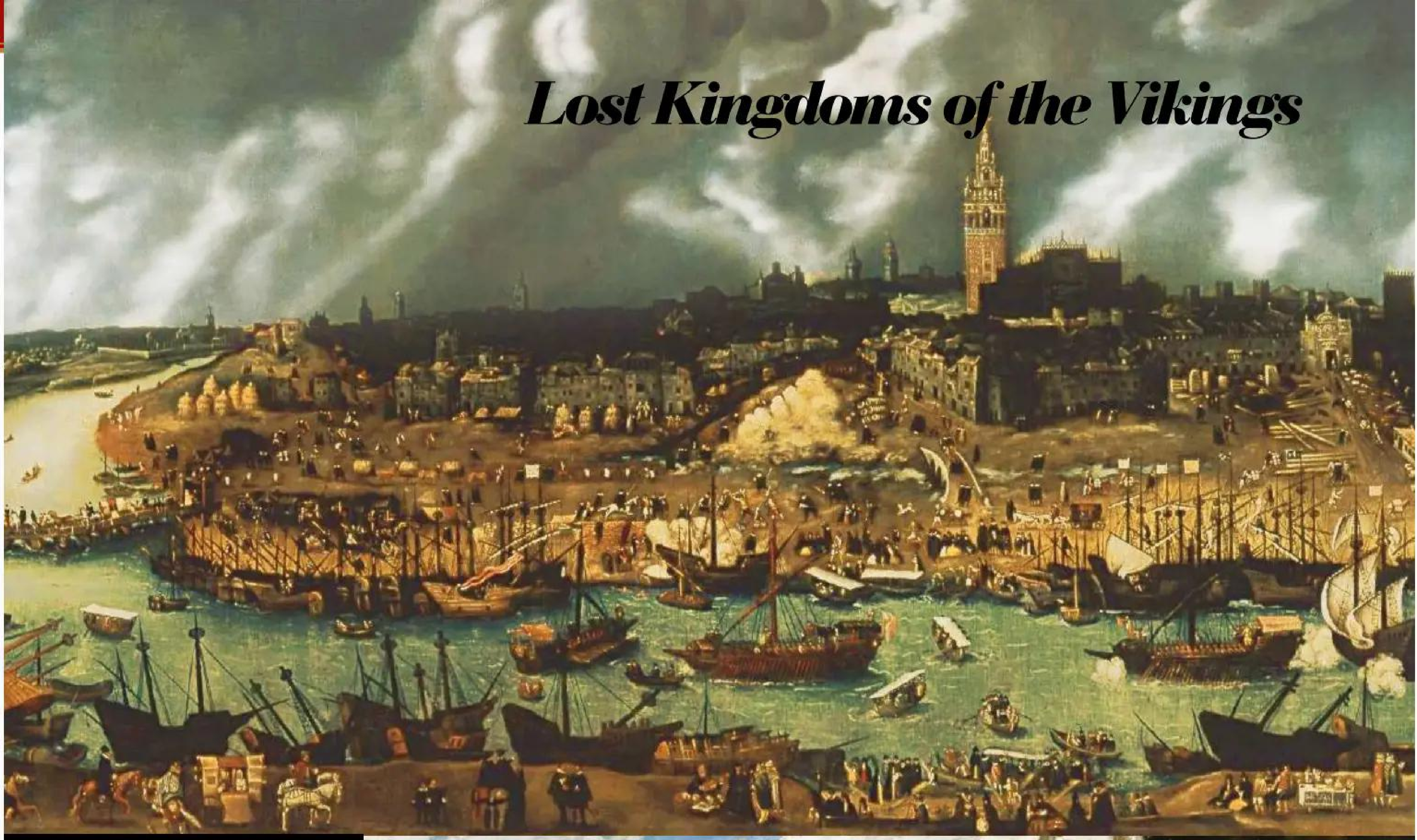
A standard tunic would be worn under the armour along with metal strips that protected the wrists and forearms from slashes.

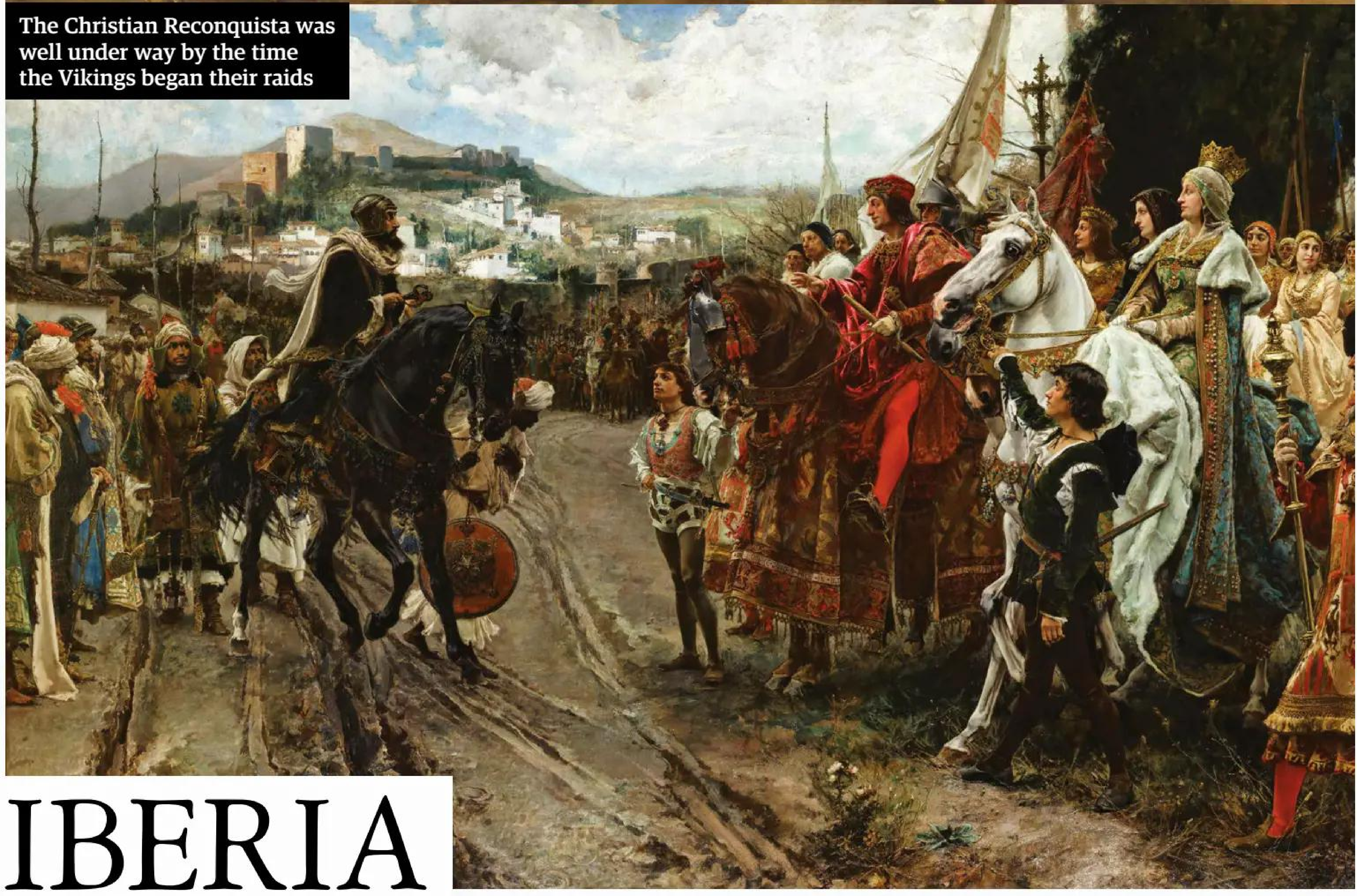
07 Armour

This elite unit had a choice of lamellar armour made out of iron or bronze plates or a chain mail hauberk.

08 Mounted infantry berserkers

The Varangian guard rode to battle but did their fighting on foot. Their heavy armour had pros and cons depending on the battle.





The Christian Reconquista was well under way by the time the Vikings began their raids

IBERIA

The Norse expansion into the Christian north and Islamic south of Spain

After controlling the Bay of Biscay and establishing themselves on France's western coast, the Vikings moved even further south to the Iberian Peninsula. The first known attack was made up of 100 ships launched from Aquitaine in 844 and raided both Gijon and Coruna. After meeting strong resistance, the seafarers changed tack and headed for what is now Portugal. The raids were initially small and infrequent and, as with most Nordic attacks of the age, the coast was the worst affected. Prisoners were taken and monasteries were destroyed.

The first few assaults were mostly concentrated in the north of the Christian kingdoms of Asturias and Galicia. The southern Islamic part of Spain, al-Andalus, was targeted as well. Seville became a Viking city for six weeks in 844 and Lisbon was plundered for all its worth. The attacks came at a bad time for the Muslim population, who were enduring the start of the Christian Reconquista. Despite the ability for longships to sail from Normandy in less than a week and evidence of longphorts, Iberia would soon become a bridge too far for the Norsemen.

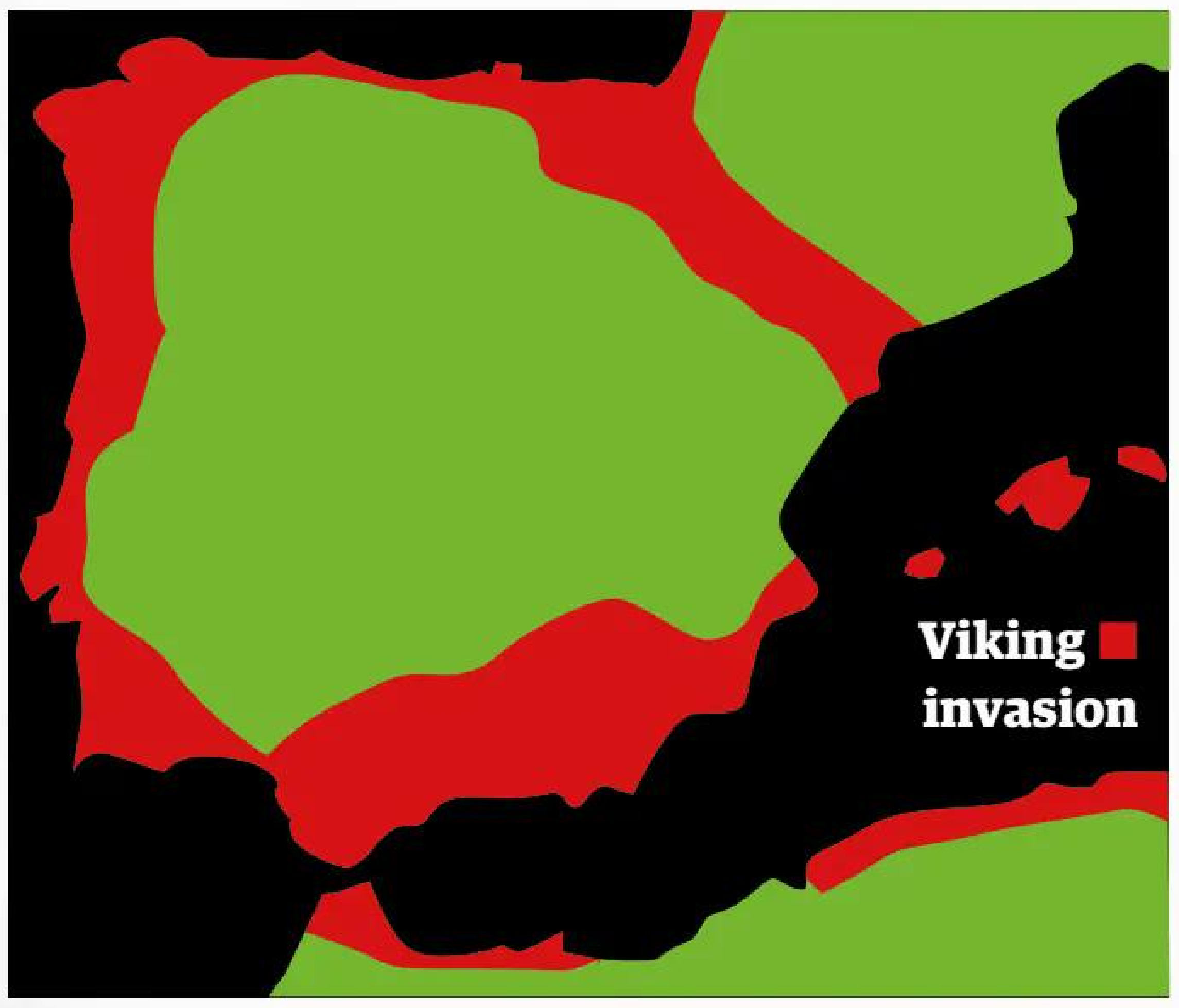
As the attacks subsided, the lands were regained from the Vikings. The Muslim leader, Abd al-Rahman II, took back Seville and sent the heads of 200 Viking warriors to his Moroccan allies. The Vikings returned in 859 led by Bjorn Ironside and Hastein. They sailed around the peninsula in search of southern France and Italy. This turned out to be a shrewd move as both the Muslim and Christian settlements were too strong for long-term attacks to be worthwhile and repelled the Vikings before they could get close to Seville this time. The Norsemen returned north to France but their descendants, the Christianised Normans, would be back in the Mediterranean in later centuries.

LEGACY

The remnants of Viking expansion in Europe, Asia and the Americas

The influence left by the Vikings is greater than many are led to believe. From the Normans in the west to the Rus in the east, many civilisations that went on to dominate the late Middle Ages and beyond owe their roots to Viking expansion. The Vikings helped open the doors to pan-European trade and established urban centres at Dublin, Kiev and Reykjavík, cities at almost opposite ends of Europe. The effect of Norse culture is restricted more than it could have been as the Vikings never truly settled south of Denmark. They were an exploring people who lacked mass land armies and huge cities to stamp their authority and leadership on areas outside their own sphere of influence. They simply did not have the construction nous to establish a citadel as large or as powerful as Constantinople or Rome. Additionally, the Christianisation of Europe watered down the Nordic influence further and ended it completely when Scandinavia was fully converted in the 12th century.

Outside of Europe, Africa and Asia Minor were only briefly settled upon, so the influence seen today is from the Mongol Empire and Islamic caliphates. America suffers from the same problem, and that is why Columbus is and always will be seen as the first to discover the New World. The Viking Age lasted for hundreds of years, and whether it's a city name in northern England, a type of axe or French surnames, the legacy is there for all to see.



Images: Alamy, Corbis, Getty Images, Osprey, Joe Cummings

748-814

CHARLEMAGNE

The 'father of Europe' and ruler of much of France and Germany, Charlemagne made his name as a king but left a legacy as the first Roman emperor since the 5th century

Over 300 years, Europe had fallen into darkness. With the power of the Pope and the once mighty Roman Church beset by enemies, the legacy of the western Roman Empire toppled as steadily and as surely as the Caesars had themselves, stability withdrawing like overstretched legionnaires and knowledge fading away like the crumbling Roman roads that cross-hatched the continent.

Europe needed a strong leader to pull it back from the precipice, and it got a brace of them in the form of the Carolingian dynasty, a family of self-made kings who stabilised their lands by force, expanded their frontiers with terrifying aggression and ensured the primacy of the Christian Church at the point of the sword. Yet, through this crucible of bloody violence emerged a western Europe reforged to survive another 1,000 years.

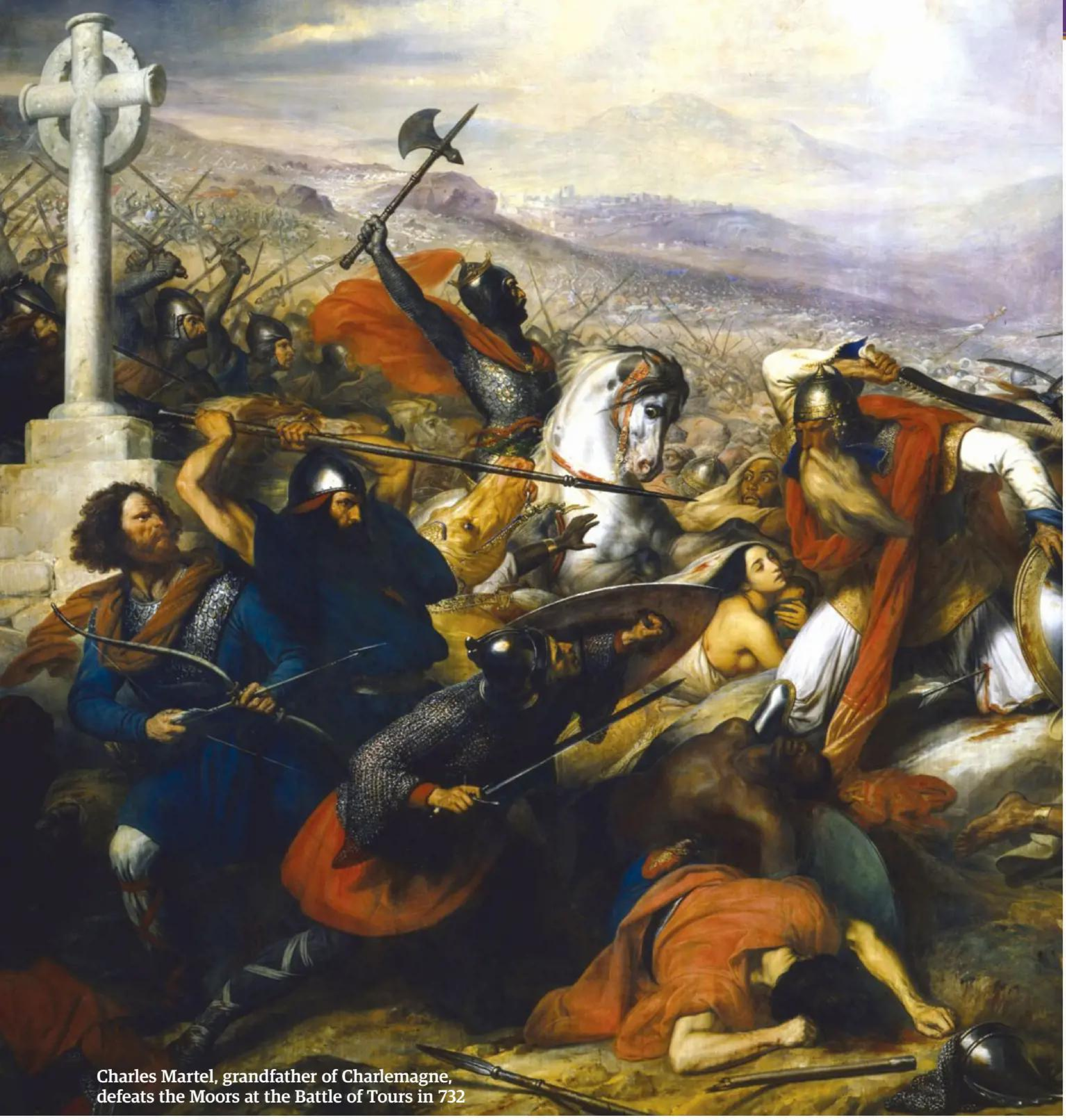
> In later life, Charlemagne came into conflict with his doctors after they advised him to stop eating roasted meat

By the 6th century, most of what is now France, western Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Belgium was inhabited by the Franks, a Germanic tribe split into several small kingdoms that had rushed into the power vacuum left by the fall of Rome. These petty principalities had been united not by their monarch – rulers in name only, the rois fainéants, the 'do-nothing kings' of the Merovingian dynasty, had been increasingly sidelined by their own ministers – but by the Mayor of the Palace, the executive of the royal administration who was half-prime minister and half-Shogun-esque warlord.

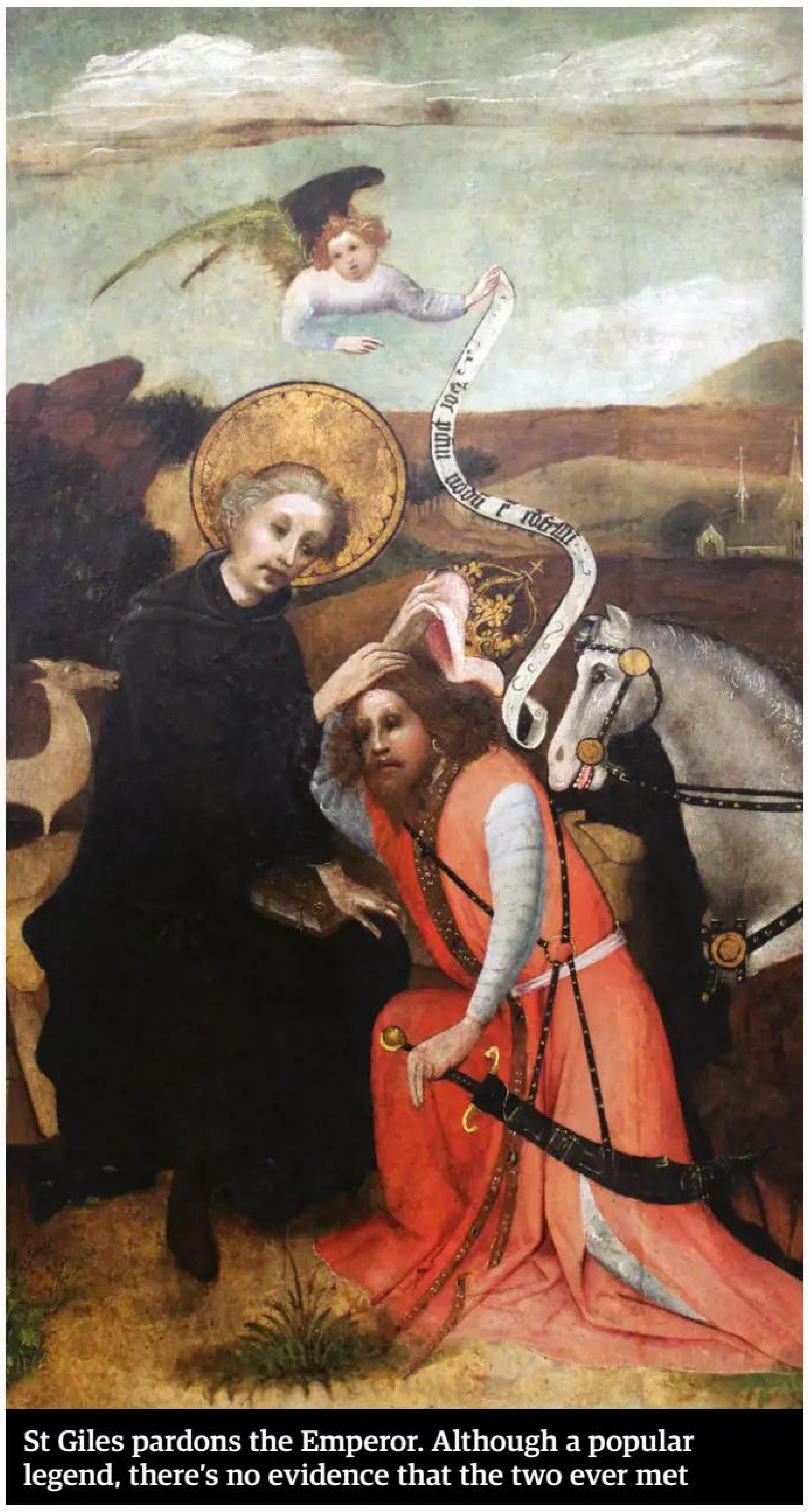
Pepin of Herstal had warred his way to stability between 680 CE and his death in 714 CE, bringing the other Frankish lands to heel and taking Christianity to their furthest and most pagan reaches. His son, Charles Martel, was a stronger hand yet. Though Pepin had nominated his grandson as successor, Charles – born out of wedlock and excluded from the court – was having none of it, and took the not-quite-throne by force. Despite not being Pepin's choice of heir, he more than honoured his father's vision, expanding the centralised control of the Frank lands and extending his rule further into modern Holland, Denmark and Germany with a formidable standing army and revolutionary use of heavy cavalry, the foundation of Europe's knights. He defeated the pagan Saxons in the east and halted the advance of the Moors – the North African and Spanish Muslims of the powerful Umayyad Caliphate – who attempted to follow up their conquest of Spain by pushing across the Pyrenees mountains into France. 'Charles the Hammer' was even offered high office by the Pope, which he declined, but it was an auspicious omen of his grandson's own journey that was to come.

Succeeding his father Pepin the Short in 768 CE – who had given up the pretence of being anything other than supreme ruler by forcing the last Merovingian king into a monastery and taking the title of 'King of the Franks' – Charlemagne, which means 'Charles the Great', shared the zeal of his predecessors. At war for most of his life, Charlemagne took Charles Martel's fight against the Moors into northern Spain, continued the conquest

Image: Getty Images



Charles Martel, grandfather of Charlemagne, defeats the Moors at the Battle of Tours in 732



St Giles pardons the Emperor. Although a popular legend, there's no evidence that the two ever met

and conversion of the Saxons and launched new campaigns against the Lombards of northern Italy, the Slavs in Croatia and the Avars in Hungary.

Leading his personal guard, the scara cavalry, into battle with his sword Joyeuse, Charlemagne's exploits have one armoured foot in myth and the other in fact, with separating the two being a difficult task, but his journey from king to the first Roman emperor since the fall of the Roman Empire has little to do with his legend as a warrior king and everything to do with the insecurity of the Church.

Pope Leo III succeeded Adrian I on the day of the previous pontiff's burial, so fearful was he that the Frankish king to whom his predecessor owed his lands and safety would feel a right to interfere in the election of the new pope. Yet, despite his wariness he was quick to bring Rome's most powerful ally on side; along with the letter that announced his succession, Leo included the keys to St Peter's Basilica and the Pope's banner. The not-so subtle message was that he viewed Charlemagne as the defender of the Holy See, and trusted him with Rome's protection. The Frank was equally magnanimous in return, congratulating the pontiff and sending vast riches, the spoils of his war against the Avars, but not without condition, suggesting that as he happened to be the stalwart defender of Christianity, the pope had a duty to pray for the Frankish armies as they continued their conquest.

Charlemagne would honour his side of this implied bargain, and in return Leo elevated him to an office left vacant since the 5th century.

While Leo engaged in his letter-writing campaign with the monarch to the north-west and used the Avar loot to become a patron of the arts, the family of the late Adrian I launched a conspiracy to remove him from his post and replace him with his nephew Paschal the Primicerius. On 25 April 799 CE, during the procession of The Greater Litanies through the Eternal City, Leo was attacked by armed thugs who stabbed him in the eyes and attempted to tear out his tongue at the root. After dragging him to the church of San Silvestro in Capite and trying to gouge out his eyes again, the bloodied pope was left unconscious as a prisoner at the monastery of St Erasmus. Accused of perjury and fornication by his rivals, the wounded – but amazingly not blinded or voiceless – Leo fled Rome to Spoleto, 126 kilometres (78 miles) north of the city, where under the protection of the Duke of Spoleto he was able to make his way to Charlemagne at Paderborn in Saxony.

That such a loyal servant of the Frankish king could be found so close to Rome, deep within Italy's central Umbria region, neatly underlines the unbalanced relationship of power between the Franks and the Roman Catholic Church that had initially caused Leo such anxiety. Though the territory had been given to Rome in 776 after the defeat of the Lombards, the king retained the power to choose the Duke, making papal control as meaningless as that of the last Merovingian kings under Charlemagne's ancestors.

Clearly, the threat of political interference from Charlemagne had been trumped by that of actual bodily harm, and Leo begged for the monarch's aid. He had no authority to do so – neither he nor the conspirators in Rome were subjects of the Franks, and no law yet existed that would make bishops subordinate to secular authority. With conflict left in Saxony to pursue, Charlemagne let the matter stew for a year and kept the recovering pontiff as his guest. Finally heading to Rome in November 800 CE with a sizeable (and no doubt fairly threatening) entourage, Charlemagne summoned a council of the city's religious authorities and patiently listened to

> *"Charlemagne's journey from king to emperor has everything to do with the insecurity of the Church"*

the accusations put to Leo, before allowing the deposed pontiff to make an impassioned plea of innocence.

Unsurprisingly, Charlemange took Leo's side, and ordered the conspirators' executions, but Leo requested that they instead be exiled, with the unpopular pope perhaps seeing an opportunity to impress with capacity for forgiveness.

Crowned 'Emperor of the Romans' on Christmas Day that same year by the grateful pope, the official report insists that Charlemagne was ambushed like some sort of early-Medieval surprise party. The king's biographer, the monk Einhard, claimed that his liege had such "aversion [to being crowned Emperor] that he declared he would not have set foot in the church… if he could have foreseen the designs of the pope."

It's entirely possible that Charlemagne and Leo came to some agreement during their year together. After all, the idea of grinning priests hiding a bejewelled imperial crown as if it were a birthday cake is too ludicrous to contemplate. Documents from his reign reveal that Charlemagne preferred using the title 'Charles, the most serene Augustus crowned by God, the great, peaceful Emperor ruling the Roman Empire' rather than the simpler and more often used 'Emperor of the Romans'. These aren't entirely the actions of someone with an aversion to the role, and the king's apparent humility may have been as expertly stage-managed as Leo's mercy.

Nonetheless, with his rule over the Frankish lands uncontested and his empire secured through sheer military prowess, Charlemagne no more needed to declare himself Roman emperor than the fearsome Charles Martel needed to be king. The vulnerable pope, however, required an emperor in order to protect himself and the vast empire with the Church at its heart. Only Rome had nostalgia for its lost empire; the Franks held their 4th century resistance to Roman rule, and their role in dismembering the Roman Empire, as a point of fierce pride.

Ultimately though, the way Charlemagne signed his name changed nothing of the way he conducted his affairs, and the impact of his ascension – reluctant or willing – to Europe's highest office would take another 150 years to make itself fully known. The first Holy Roman Emperor, Otto I, took the title in 962 CE and reinvented himself in the Frankish king's image, creating a powerful multi-ethnic state and a crown that would endure for over 1,000 years.

Through the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne's rule defined not just the primacy of France as one of Europe's imperial, religious and cultural superpowers, but of numerous Austrian, German and Italian states too.

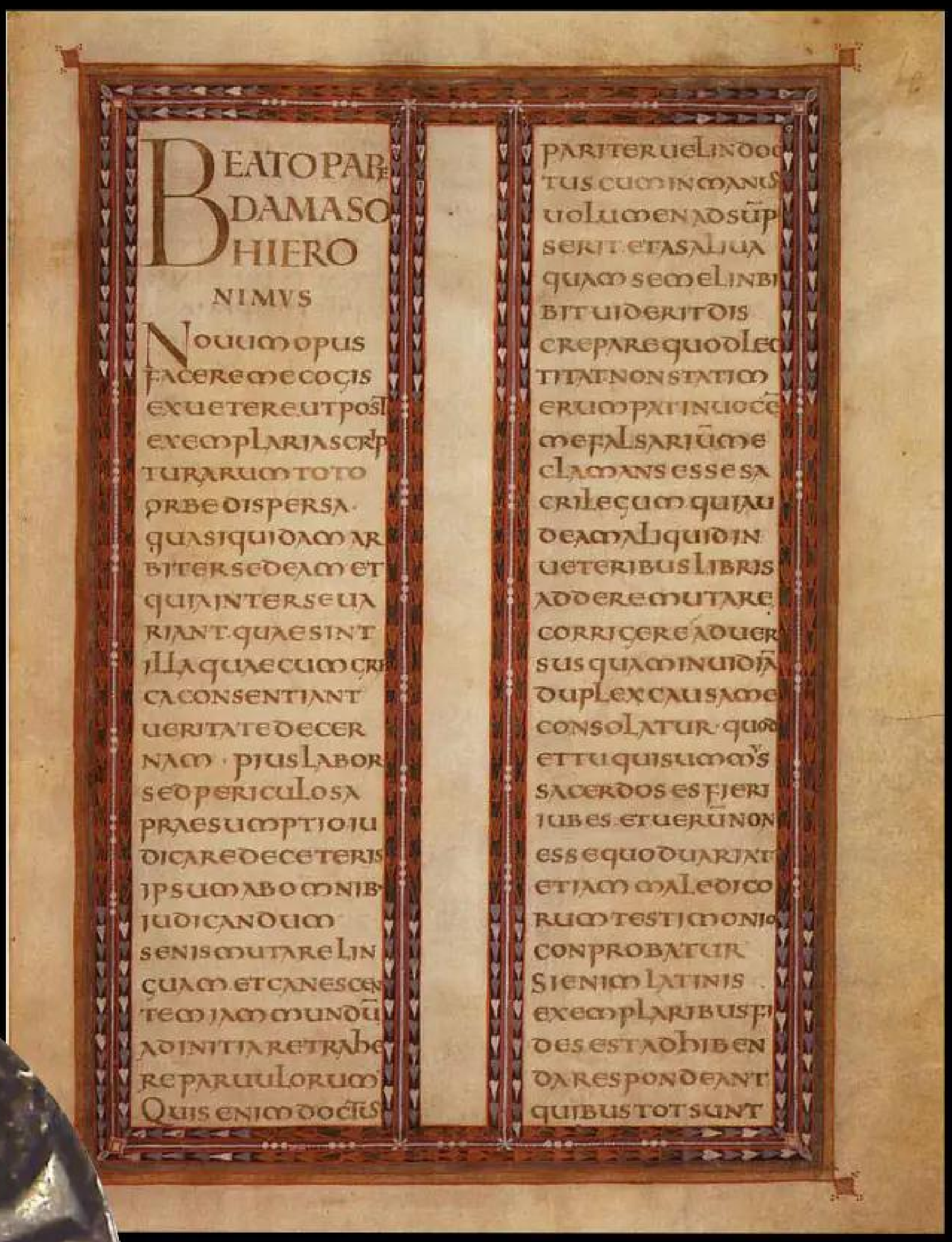
A career that began for Charlemagne as king of the Franks ended not just as emperor, but also as the father of the Europe that we can still recognise today.

BIRTH OF THE MODERN EUROPE

Three big ways in which Charlemagne changed the continent

01 MAN OF LETTERS

Frustrated by his own difficulty in mastering the written word, Charlemagne rolled out a system of reforms to the very shape of writing, insisting on a double space to separate words, an indent at the start of a paragraph and punctuation marks to indicate where the reader should pause or stop. Question marks and lower case letters also appeared.

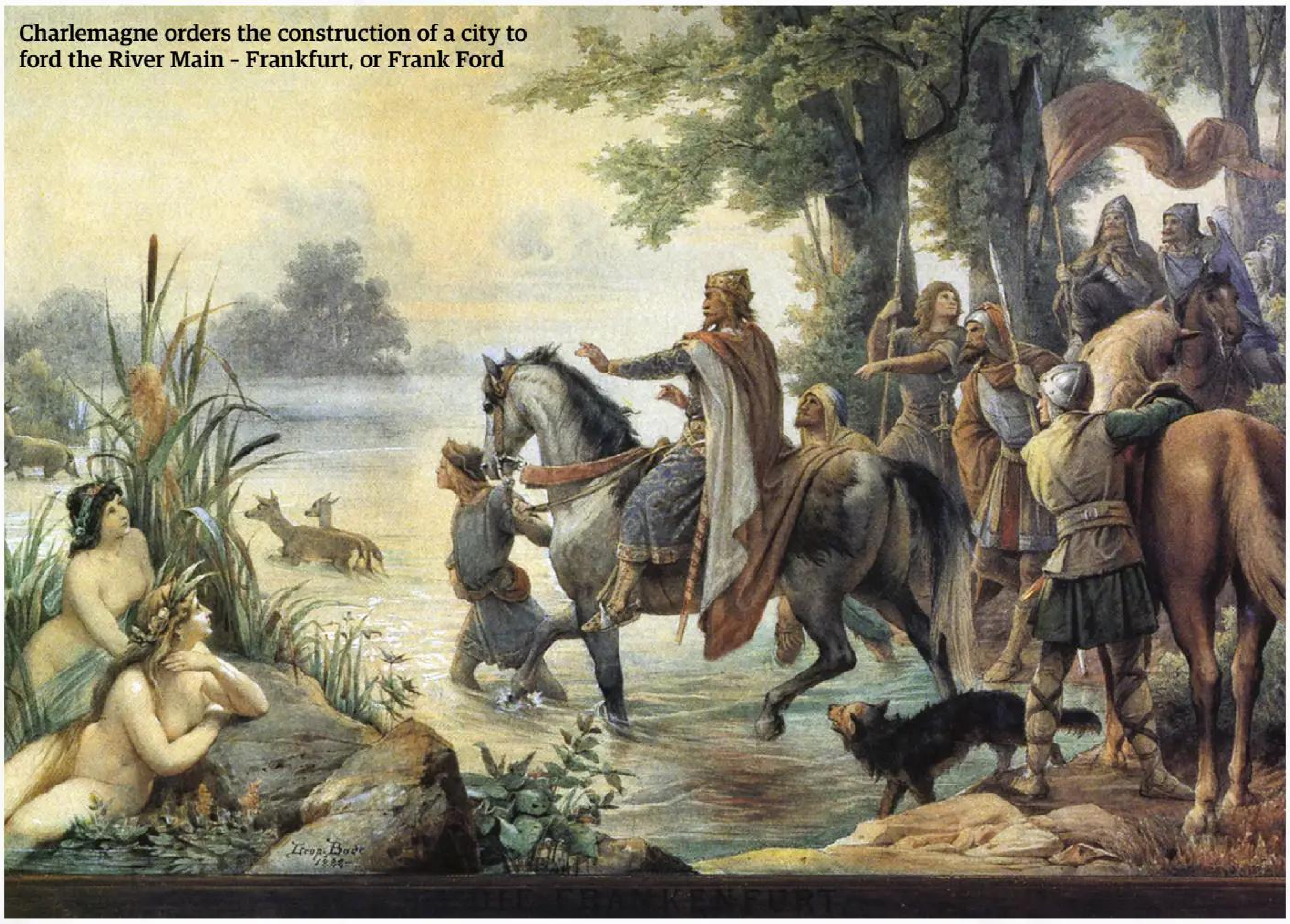


02 SILVER AGE

Due to a shortage of gold, Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxon King Offa standardised their currencies based on a pound of silver – in Latin, libra – which was broken down into 20 sous, each of 12 deniers. This is the origin of many global currencies past and present, from the British pound to the Italian lira.

03 OUT OF THE DARK

Charlemagne's interest in the arts led to the Carolingian Renaissance, a flowering of art, literature, poetry and learning.
The Dark Ages traditionally cover the 6th to 13th centuries, but for the Franks it was over before it began, and 90 per cent of surviving Roman manuscripts do so because monks copied them.



Charlemagne orders the construction of a city to ford the River Main – Frankfurt, or Frank Ford

1095-1291

THE CRUSADER KINGS

Inside Europe's quest to forge a holy empire in the Middle East through zeal and steel

Written by Peter Price

Ahe Crusades were a struggle for the soul of the Holy Land, with Christian and Muslim forces clashing for over 200 years. While thousands of ordinary men fought for what they thought was right, seizing control of the Middle East's many religious sites and venerated cities, new military orders like the Knights Templar offered opportunity for advancement, glory in battle could turn minor monarchs into living legends, and all-new dynasties were founded to rule the region. In time, a preoccupation with wealth and status would ultimately consume the Crusaders and shock polite society back in Europe with their avarice.

Around 30,000 people joined the 'People's Crusade', which preceeded the First Crusade

CALL TO ARMS

The First Crusade was called in 1095 by Pope Urban II, proclaiming, "Whoever for devotion alone, but not to gain honour or money, goes to Jerusalem to liberate the Church of God can substitute this journey for all penance." The religious fervour that inspired Crusaders to travel thousands of miles to wage a holy war cannot be overstated. While (probably exaggerated) stories of Muslims persecuting native Christians and western pilgrims in Jerusalem helped fuel support, the main driving force was that the expedition offered a new way to attain salvation. The zealous crusaders referred to their force as the 'Army of God' and the fallen as 'dead martyrs'. However, there were ulterior motives for the First Crusade. For one, the papacy was engaged in a mighty struggle with the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, and calling the crusade greatly enhanced Urban II's standing. Byzantine emperor Alexios I had also beseeched Urban II to send military aid to help him fight Seljuk Turks encroaching on his border. Relations between the Catholic West and Orthodox East had long been fractious and the pontiff saw it as an opportunity to improve relations.

Four armies of Crusaders were formed from troops of different part of Europe, led by high-ranking nobles, including Raymond of Saint-Gilles, Godfrey of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois and Bohemond of Taranto (along with his nephew Tancred).

While people from all social classes 'took the cross', no kings fought in the First Crusade. A fifth column of less-organised knights and commoners known as the 'People's Crusade' was also led by the popular preacher called Peter the Hermit. The Crusaders marched overland to Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in August 1096. Peter's army arrived first and did not heed Emperor Alexios I's advice to wait for back-up before attacking. In the first major clash between the Crusaders and Muslims, Turkish forces crushed the invading Europeans at Civetot.

Once the full force of Christians arrived, the Crusades quickly went their way. In quick succession they overthrew the city Nicaea, the Seljuk capital of Anatolia; the Roman Empire's former third city, Antioch in June 1098; and Jerusalem in 1099. The capture of the holy city saw the Crusaders unleash an orgy of destruction, killing men, women and children, with both Jews and Muslims targeted as the city was 'cleansed' of religious opposition.

Before they crossed the Bosporus, Alexios I had to tried to make the Latin forces swear an oath of allegiance to him recognising his authority over any land regained from the Turks, as well as any other territory they might conquer. Tellingly, all but Bohemond – who had previously fought the Byzantines and wanted to get back in their good books – resisted taking the oath. With the Holy Land now under western control, the territory was divided up into settlements, collectively known as Outremer, literally meaning 'overseas' in French.

These were comprised of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the Principality of Antioch and the counties of Tripoli and Edessa. However, while a new Latin aristocracy sprang up in the Middle East, most crusaders soon returned home with their plunder, leaving the small and fractured kingdoms to stand alone against the still numerous and powerful Islamic rulers. While they were protected by mighty fortresses, these crusader states still hung on a knife edge and constantly struggled for survival with little support from Western Europe.

HOLY EMPIRE

While the Outremer states were being carved up, the nobles that led the Crusade were coy about being crowned ruler. When Raymond refused to be crowned, Godfrey accepted it but refused the title

“The religious fervour that inspired Crusaders to travel thousands of miles to wage a holy war cannot be overstated”

Illustration: Joe Cummings

of king – preferring to be called 'Defender of the Holy Sepulchre' instead.

However, Godfrey's successors had no such qualms. His brother Baldwin became the first crusader king in 1100, expanding the Kingdom of Jerusalem into modern-day Israel, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. He died leading raids on Islamic Egypt. His successor and cousin, Baldwin II, continued to conqueror territory for the kingdom.

However, it was under a crusader queen that Jerusalem enjoyed a golden age. Baldwin II's half-French, half-Armenian daughter, Melisende, was married to Fulk of Anjou – a French aristocrat with close ties to both the French and English crowns. Yet, it was she, groomed to rule from a young age, who held the real power from 1131. Capable of cowing her husband until his death in 1143, Melisende became regent for her 13-year-old son, another Baldwin. She built today's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Tomb of the Virgin Mary and the markets of Jerusalem that survive to this day.

It was Melisende that sounded the alarm that led Pope Eugenius III to call for the Second Crusade in 1145. In December 1144, Zengi, the Muslim ruler of Aleppo and Mosul, captured Edessa. Melisende sent armies to save the Crusader state, but without reinforcements the last ditch effort was bound to fail. The other major crusader state, Antioch was preoccupied with its own fight with the Byzantines, so the Latin settlers requested help from the west.

Eager to live up to their crusading forefathers, this time many royals took the cross, most notably King Louis VII of France and Emperor Conrad III of Germany. Louis was joined by his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, who travelled with him to Constantinople and Jerusalem. Though its said Eleanor insisted on leading the soldiers from her duchy into battle, claims that she dressed as an Amazon while doing so are disputed.

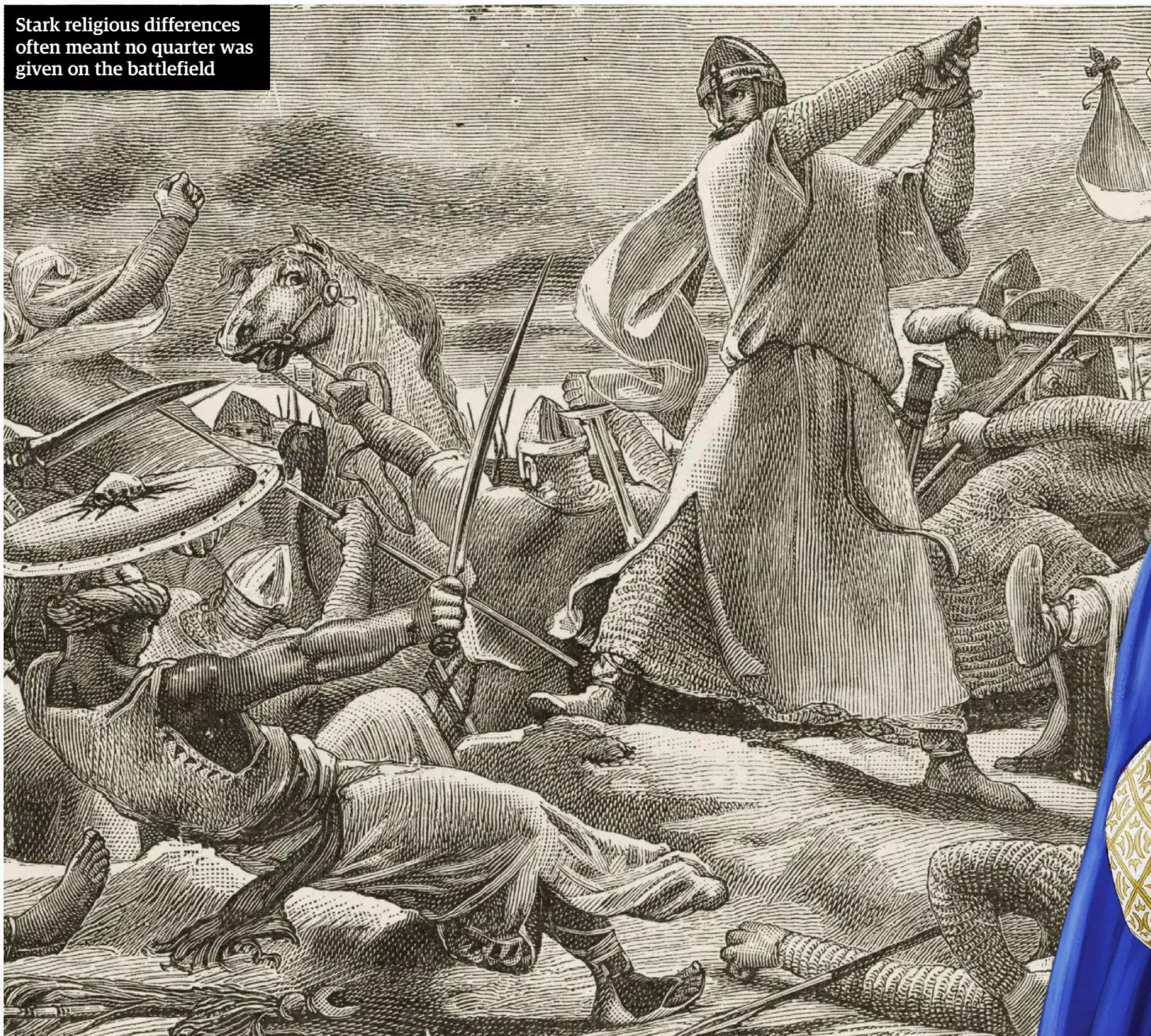
Though the Second Crusade amassed vastly larger forces than the First Crusade, sending 50,000 to the Holy Land, it was not a success. The western forces lacked discipline, supplies and finance, and were badly bloodied by the Seljuk Turks as they crossed Asia Minor.

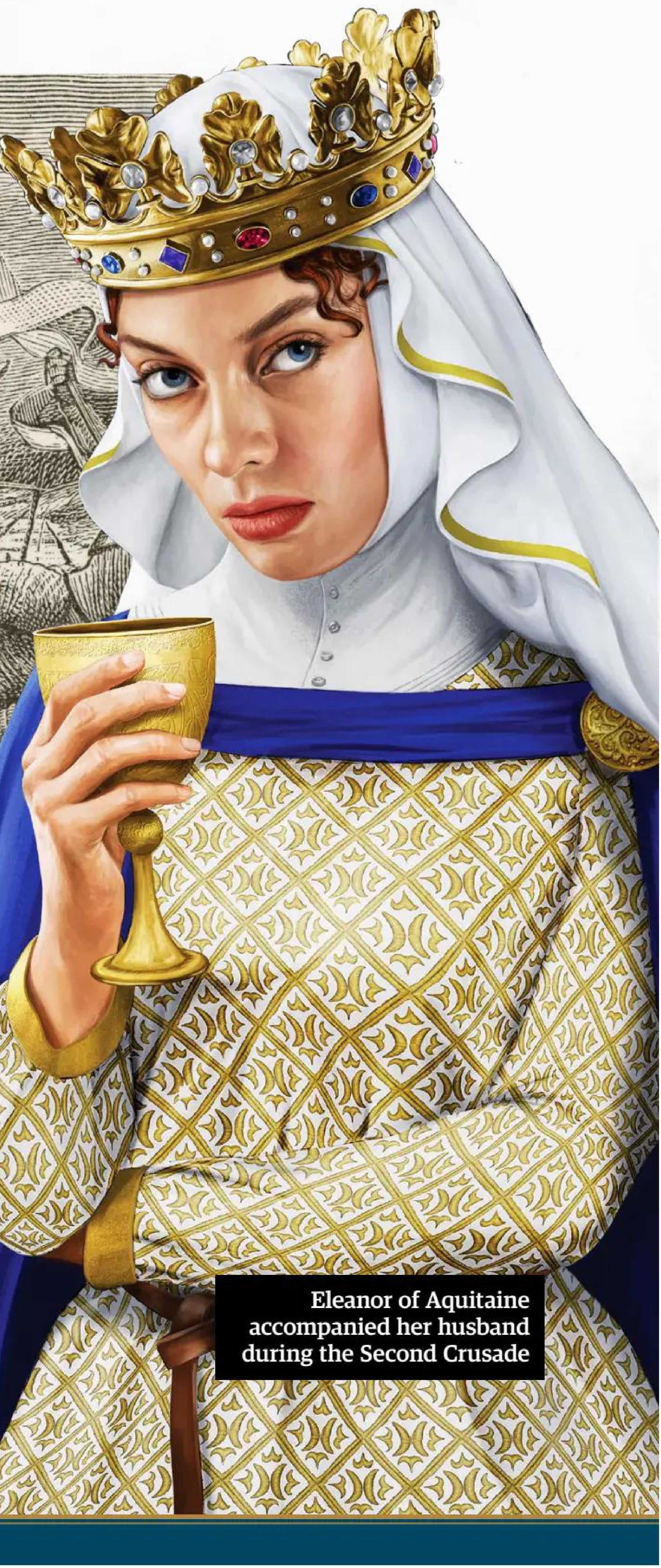
While the original focus had been saving Edessa, by the time French and Germans arrived in 1147, it was firmly under control of Nur ad-Din, Zengi's successor. Instead, the crusaders targeted the Muslim city of Damascus. Yet four days into their siege, Nur ad-Din arrived with reinforcements, leading to a humiliating retreat. The Europeans returned home in 1148, leaving Jerusalem strategically weaker than when they had arrived.

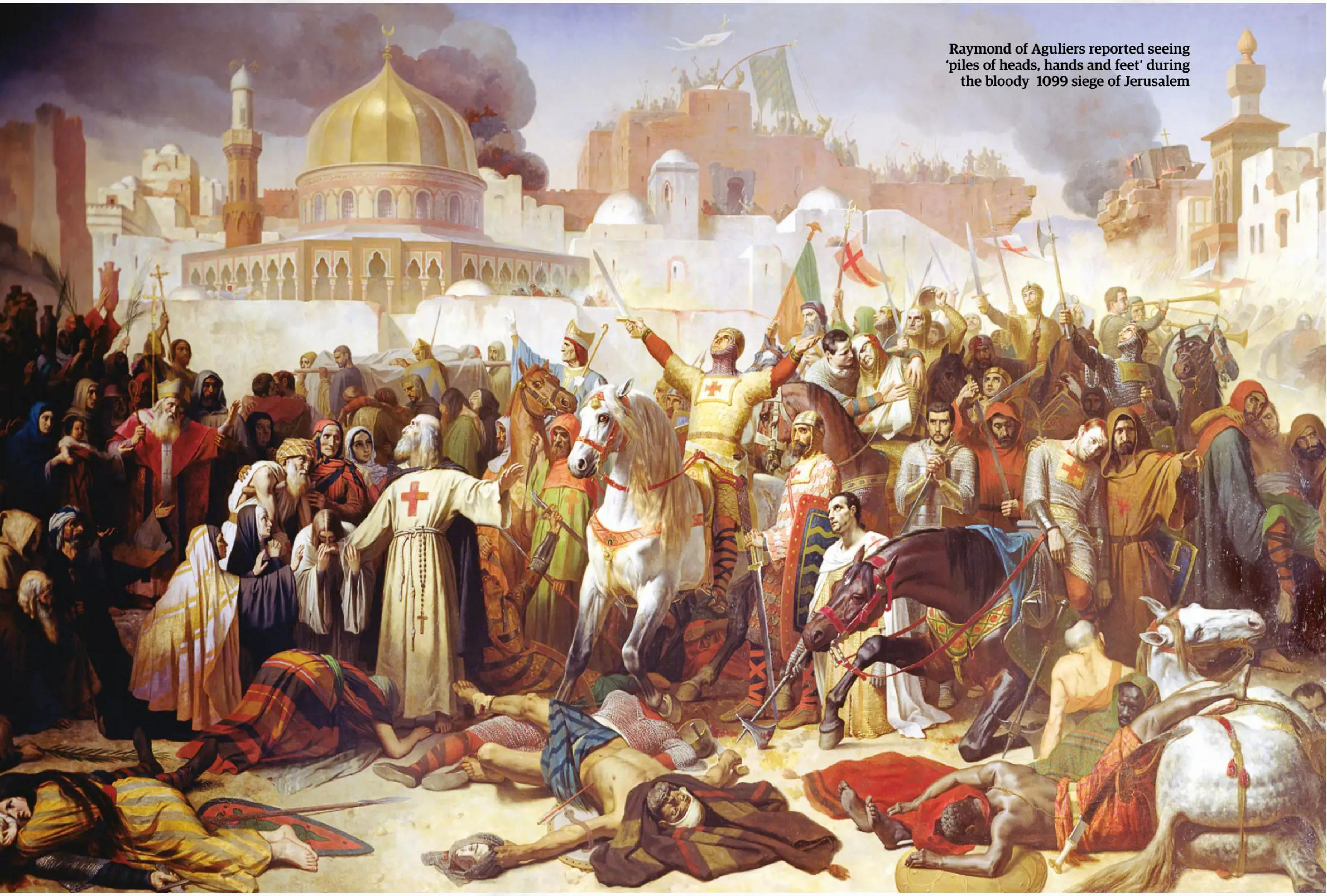
To complicate matters, around this time Melisende fell out with her son, Baldwin III. Now seven years into his majority, Melisende still held the reins of power, unwilling to let her headstrong son take the throne as sole monarch. A compromise was reached where Baldwin governed the north of the region while the queen took Judea and Samaria. However, civil war broke out when Baldwin invaded his mother's territory. Mother and son eventually reconciled, with Melisende retiring in 1154. After his rule was stabilised Baldwin was free to defend the kingdom's borders. After a prolonged campaign, he finally scored a decisive victory, defeating Nur ad-Din in 1158.

SALADIN'S JIHAD

The succession of the kings and queens of Outremer was never a certainty and Baldwin III's nephew Baldwin IV was no exception. Although a bright youth, his tutors became concerned over his apparent high pain tolerance when playing with other children. This perceived bravery soon gave way to shocking news – the future king had leprosy. Crowned in 1174, his rule was expected to


Stark religious differences often meant no quarter was given on the battlefield


Eleanor of Aquitaine accompanied her husband during the Second Crusade



Raymond of Aguliers reported seeing 'piles of heads, hands and feet' during the bloody 1099 siege of Jerusalem

CALCULATING THE FIRST CRUSADE

35,000
European Christians fought in First Crusade

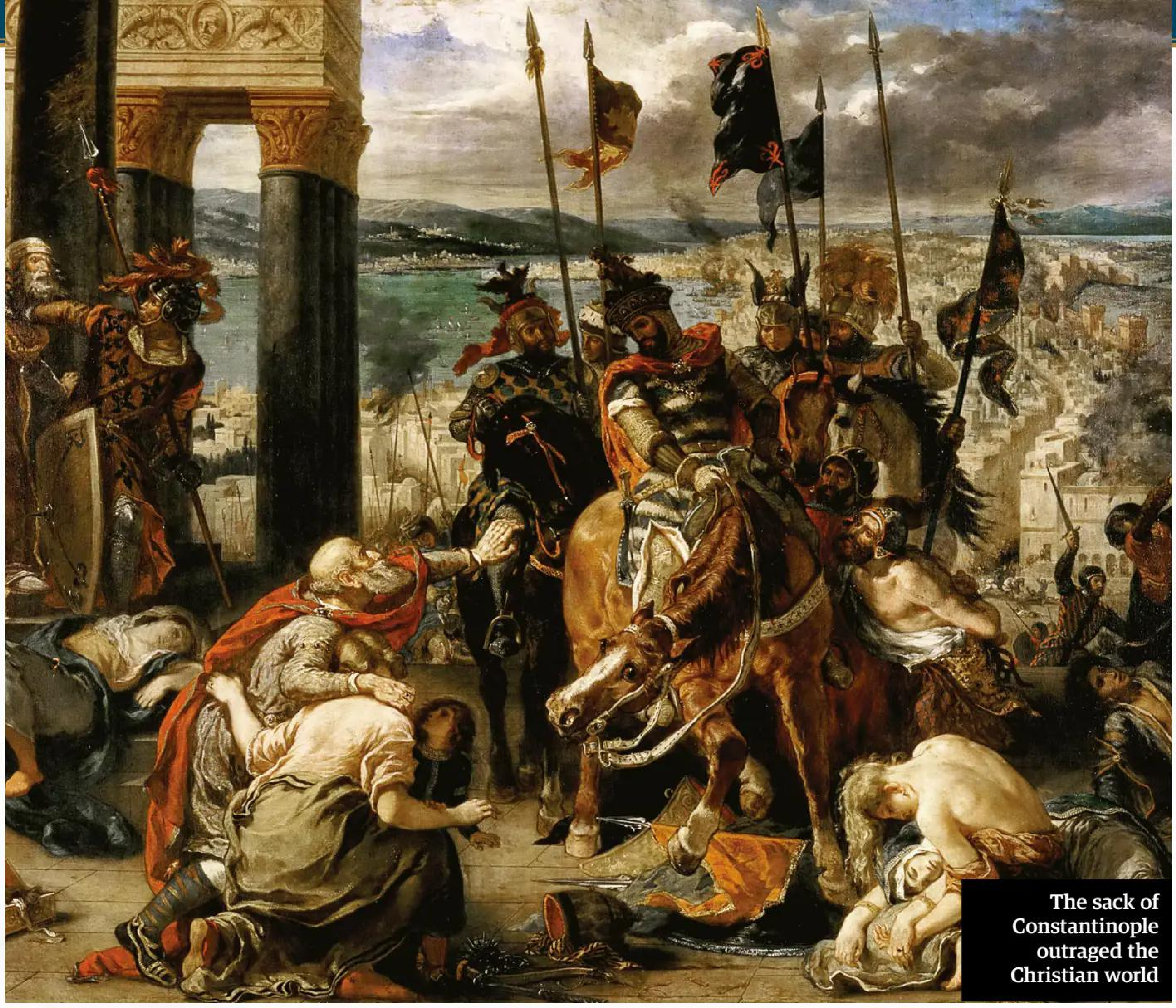
10,000
People killed in the sack of Jerusalem

2,700 miles
Walking distance from Paris to Jerusalem

2
The number of times the crusading army was (allegedly) reduced to cannibalism

4
Number of states created by the crusaders in the Holy Land

Images: Alamy, Getty Images


The sack of Constantinople outraged the Christian world

be brief and not much hope was held that he would be any sort of leader beyond a figurehead.

Baldwin IV quickly dismissed this notion by taking a hard military stance. Conducting raids and skirmishes, the young king won several surprising victories against the encroaching Saladin, a sultan who had united much of Egypt, Iraq and Syria under one banner, having his eyes set on Jerusalem.

However, by 1183 weeping sores all over Baldwin's body had rendered it almost useless, and he was almost blind. As a testament to his rule and reputation, upon hearing the 'Leper King' had joined the army defending Jerusalem, albeit carried on a litter, Saladin retreated and did not attack again until Baldwin died in 1185.

By now, the crusader states had been emptied of fighting men, leaving the castle and towns with tiny and inexperienced garrisons. The new ruler of Jerusalem, King Guy, was also a military novice, to the point he marched his army away from precious water sources while chasing Saladin's men in the desert. Delirious with thirst and heat, these men were cut down at the Battle of Hattin in 1187.

With no one left to stand in his way, Saladin snatched Jerusalem from Christian hands. However, the sultan did allow the Christian population to buy their way to freedom, and even let them haggle the price down. A stark contrast to the crusaders' bloody rape of the city almost 100 years prior.

RISE LIKE LIONS

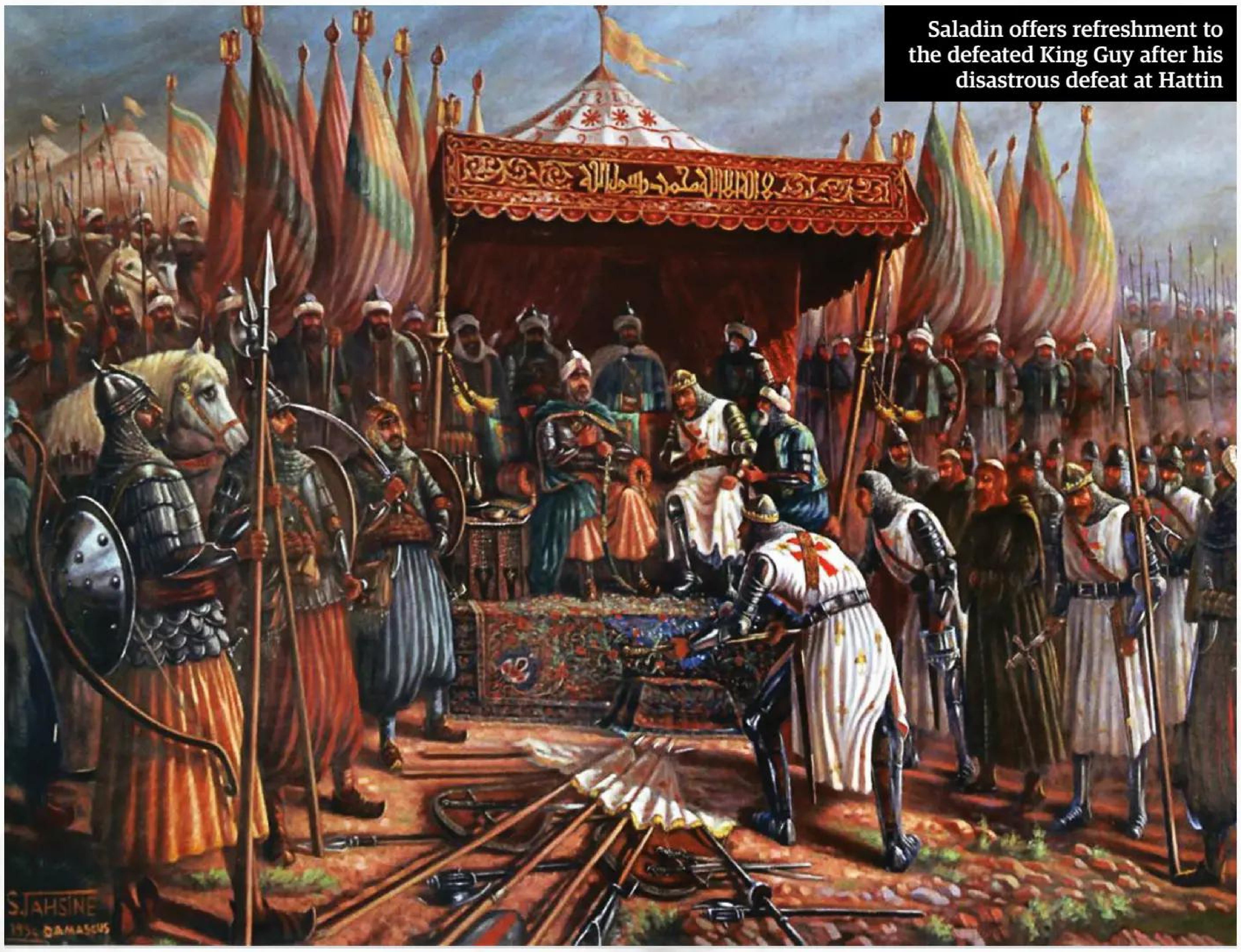
The loss of the holy city once again sent shock waves across Christendom and the Third Crusade was quickly called to re-establish control in the region. This crusade would ultimately be characterised by the rivalry between Saladin and Richard I of England. Although they never met in person, the two giants clashed repeatedly on the sands of Outremer and achieved legendary status in their respective communities.

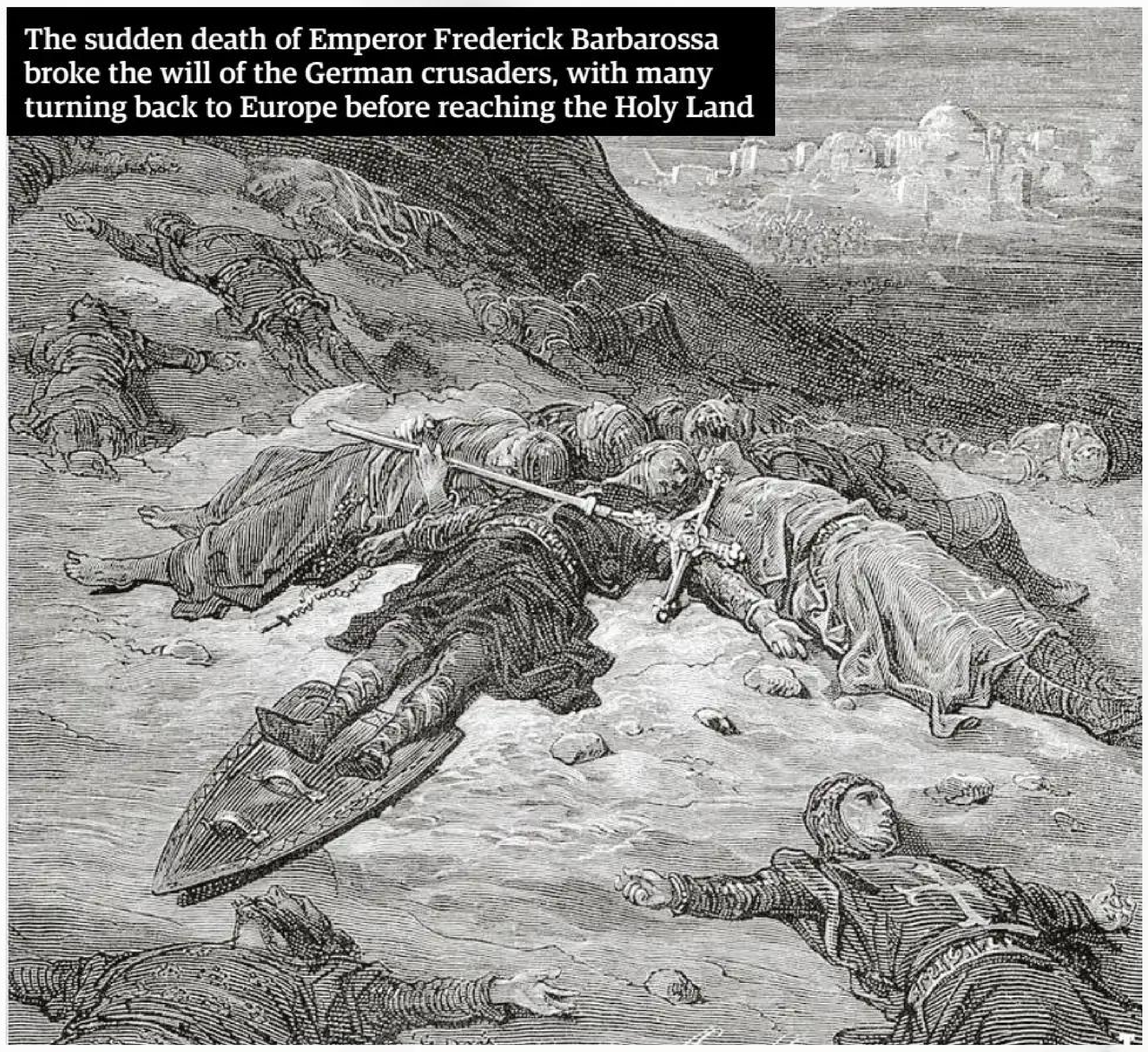
The Third Crusade was another kingly crusade with three monarchs, Richard I of England, Philip II of France and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa of Germany all taking the cross. Commanding the largest kingdom, Emperor Frederick was the obvious choice out of all of them to lead the army. His experience of fighting the Muslims and his massive army of 100,000 men, the largest crusading force at that time, would be invaluable to retake the Holy Land.

However, his triumphant march across Europe was cut short while crossing a river in Armenia ahead of his army. The king's horse shied on a bridge and plunged him into the raging water. Probably weighed down by his armour, Frederick was dragged under and drowned, a rather unceremonious end for the glorious emperor. His son, eager to see his father reach the Holy Land, had his body pickled in vinegar and transported the rest of the way. The emperor's remains were spread across the Holy Land and divided between different churches.

With Frederick dead, Richard I was left to take up the mantle. Son of Eleanor of Aquitaine and her second husband, Henry II, the king had a middling reputation when he set off for war, but by the end of the Third Crusade would be regarded as a legend. Earning the nickname 'Lionheart' for his courage, Richard dazzled the European and Middle Eastern leaders with his charisma. Many crusaders mortgaged their properties and sold their personal possessions to pay for their crusade but Richard took this even further, and looked to sell his new English kingdom for the chance to capture the holy city. He raised funds by any means necessary, even allegedly selling nobles and government officials their lands and titles back.

In June 1191, Richard made a grand entrance at the siege of Acre. For months, Christian forces had pecked away at the city's defences and a victory here would be a great blow to Saladin's power in the region. Thanks to Richard's renewed efforts, the city fell just over a month later. He had won a great victory but deep divisions in the crusader camp had split the army. Most notably, Philip had never shared Richard's crusading zeal and this, coupled with the hot climate and exotic diseases, saw the French contingent leave soon after Acre was conquered.


Saladin offers refreshment to the defeated King Guy after his disastrous defeat at Hattin



The sudden death of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa broke the will of the German crusaders, with many turning back to Europe before reaching the Holy Land

Europeans were exhausted from crusading by the 14th century

As Saladin's army had been engaging the crusaders throughout the siege, tense negotiations on prisoner transfers were now taking place. This set the scene for one of the most controversial acts of barbarism in crusading history. The hefty ransoms pushed on Saladin were more than the emir could afford, and as time drew on, many believed the lack of payment was a delaying tactic designed to keep the crusader army mired at Acre. With rumours of the Muslims killing their Christian prisoners, Richard ordered the captured garrison, around 3,000 men, to be brought out and slaughtered in full view of the Muslim army.

Abysmal winter weather battered the army on its march to Jerusalem and made long term occupation of the area impossible. With his goal tantalisingly close, Richard ordered the retreat back to the coast. Jerusalem was to remain in Muslim hands and while the Europeans had made serious gains along the coast, their sole objective had eluded them.

THE FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE

With the failure of the Third Crusade to take Jerusalem, another crusade was called for and in 1202 the Fourth Crusade was underway. However, it was an abject failure that only served to deepen the divide between the Eastern and Western churches. The Fourth Crusade caused widespread scandal in Europe for its violence against fellow Christians. The crusades, which had been started as a holy war against the Muslims and perceived Christian persecution, were now willing participants. Attacking and capturing the Christian city of Zara to pay off their great debt to Venice, Pope Innocent III flew into a rage and excommunicated the Venetians.

The crusade moved to Constantinople, where they became embroiled in a dynastic dispute between the Byzantines. Thoughts of a holy war were forgotten as the Christians sacked the city, after they were not given the money promised to them for helping the exiled prince take the throne. One of the greatest Christian cities was stripped bare of its wealth and it inhabitants were subjected to horrific pillaging. The Venetians took countless priceless artefacts, including the four massive metal horses now adorning St Mark's Cathedral in Venice.

Innocent III condemned the sacking but unlike the aftermath at Zara, he did not excommunicate anyone who had taken part. He could have seen the sacking and the subsequent carving up of the Byzantine territory as a way to unify the Catholic and Orthodox church and heal the rift between the crusaders and the Byzantines.

This view quickly faded as news of the horrific attack on the city made its way west. Attempting to keep crusading on a tight papal leash, Innocent III drew focus away from fighting pagans in France and Spain and reoriented Europe's crusading eye once more on the Holy Land. With these objectives came the refocusing of military strategy by the Latin crusaders. Egypt, not Jerusalem, would become the target of the crusader force. His plan to take Egypt, echoed by the leaders of subsequent crusades, looked to cut off the Muslim-occupied city from its power base and take out the majority of Muslim power in the Middle East in one swoop. These expeditions, like the ones before, failed.

The European crusaders liked to think of themselves as superior, both martially and spiritually, to all that lived in the Holy Land. When they made the journey by land or sea it was to bring the fight to the infidel, not to coexist nicely with them. Much to the new arrivals' chagrin, Muslim life in the crusader states continued with the sporadic European influxes. Latin Christians took on Arabic customs such as regular bathing and even a poor knight or noble could wear sumptuous silks that would make a European noble's head turn.

While the armies of Europe were responsible for much of the crusade's success, they also didn't aid the long term survival of the crusader states and crusading in general. Each crusade, excluding the disastrous fourth, saw thousands of men descend on the Holy Land to wreak havoc, only for many to return home once completed. This shortage of manpower was a problem from the first crusade as trained military men were required to garrison the towns and castles captured in the name of Christendom. The knightly orders like the Templar and Hospitaller stepped up to fill the gaps left by the retreating Europeans, but the ebbing of men from the Holy Land slowly drained the crusader states' manpower. This ebbing of manpower was also reflected in crusading spirit.

> The fall of Acre, a Crusader city, in 1291 is considered to be the end of the Crusades by many historians

With the frenzied zeal of the First Crusade never quite captured again, enthusiasm for crusading dwindled, with the 'golden age' of crusading lead by Richard never to be repeated. Kings were uneasy about leaving their kingdoms for lengths of time, like Philip II abandoning his vows to return to France. The death rattles of the crusading spirit were sounded in the 13th century when the future Edward I of England, was forced to return to Europe and leave Outremer to its fate.

With the rise of the powerful Mamluk Caliphate in Egypt, defeat after defeat soon saw the last of the Christian strongholds fall at the turn of the 14th century. The crusades, which had raged for over 200 years in the Holy Land, were over.

1346-c.1351

SURVIVING THE BLACK DEATH

The terrifying true story of the outbreak that crippled the Medieval world

After enjoying generations of sunshine and warmer climes, Europe had undergone an unprecedented population boom that saw more people living on the continent than ever before. At the turn of the first millennium there were 24 million people in Europe, and by 1340 this had reached 54 million. A dire evil, however, stalked the land just as the Little Ice Age began, and a century later Europe's population had plummeted to just 37 million.

The origins of this bringer of death were in Central Asia. It travelled along Silk Roads, arriving in Crimea in 1346 and making its way across the Mediterranean and around Europe. It has long been stated that the illness was spread by rats carrying fleas infected with Yersinia pestis, although this has been questioned in recent years, with new research suggesting that it was a result of human fleas and body lice. Nevertheless, the disease wept from the bulbous, stinking sores that erupted in people's groins and armpits. It struck fiercely and mercilessly, bringing down towns in a matter of days, erasing families in mere hours.

While we now call the great pandemic that brought Europe to its knees in the mid-14th century the Black Death, it was known by a different name at the time – the Pestilence. It is shrouded in mystery and researchers still debate its exact components and the path it took across the Continent. What is certain is that it originated in the eastern end of the continent, and worked its way through the Mongolian Empire before piercing Caffa (now Feodosiya in Ukraine), Sicily and southern Europe, reaching peak strength as it smashed into France and England. The bacterium itself – Yersinia pestis – was a rather nasty piece of work; it would infect the blood of fleas and then cause a buildup of old blood and cells within the proventriculus (a valve preceding the flea's stomach). This blockage meant that when a hungry flea tried to bite its next victim, the high pressure in its stomach would force some of the ingested blood back into the open wound, along with thousands of bacterial cells that had accumulated in the proventriculus.

This swarm of Yersinia pestis would then drain along the lymphatic tract of the victim from the source of the bite down to the nearest lymph node. Once there, the bacteria would proceed to colonise the lymph node so entirely that it would swell, stiffen and ooze a rancid pus. Since most people were bitten on their legs, this would usually be the lymph node in the groin. These enlarged lymph nodes, known as buboes, were the main sign of Pestilence; ugly and painful, they ranged from the size of a grape to a fat orange and they made any movement unbearable.

Although the first wave of the bubonic plague ended around 1351, there would be successive outbreaks over the next few centuries

Before the appearance of the buboes though, victims would have a slight warning. Flu-like symptoms would appear first, swiftly followed by a high fever. Within a day or two these would be joined by 'God's tokens' – small circular rashes, also called roses – that would spread over the body and particularly around infected lymph nodes. Caused by weak blood vessel walls and internal haemorrhaging, they were a sure sign that you didn't just have a nasty cold, as noted by Shakespeare: 'the tokened pestilence where death is sure'. Things tended to move quickly once the buboes had boiled up through the skin. Diarrhoea and vomiting would ensue, as often would septic shock due to the buboes bursting, with respiratory failure and pneumonia wiping up the last sops of life. Within two weeks, four out of five people who contracted the plague died.

Agnolo di Tura del Grasso, a chronicler from Siena, Italy, captured the unbridled terror of the time well: 'I do not know where to begin describing its relentless cruelty; almost everyone who witnessed it seemed stupefied by grief. It is not possible for the human tongue to recount such a horrible thing, and those who did not see such horrors can well be called blessed. They died almost immediately; they would swell up under the armpits and in the groin and drop dead while talking. Fathers abandoned their children, wives left their husbands, brothers forsook each other; all fled from each other because it seemed that the disease could be passed on by breath and sight. And so they died, and one could not find people to carry out burials for money or friendship.'

In the face of Pestilence, King Philip VI of France commissioned the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Paris to deduce the source of the evil so that it might be eradicated. The

Illustration: Joe Cummings

findings of these professors did not bode well, for they ascribed the tragedy to the conjunction of Saturn, Mars and Jupiter in Aquarius, and to the position of Saturn in the House of Jupiter – and nothing could be done to challenge the will of the cosmos. At the time, Jupiter was believed to be the source of warm, humid vapours, while hot, dry Mars was thought to ignite them. These pestilential vapours were thought to form a thick, stinking smog of sickness known as a miasma, which was compounded by the sulphurous eruptions of volcanoes and wrathful power of earthquakes.

Believed to be the main culprit of the Black Death, people gave up bathing (as it opened the pores to miasma), barricaded themselves in closed rooms hung with thick tapestries to block out the poisoned air and took to carrying nosegays and pomanders to avail themselves of the evil stench. None of this would save them though.

In 1346, amid reports from the east of biblical plagues – rains of frogs and serpents, hail, stinking smoke and thunder – the Mongols of the Golden Horde attacked Caffa – an island port off the north coast of the Black Sea. The horde laid siege to the city and were all set for a protracted campaign when the Black Death struck them in the back ranks. Suddenly, their army was dying and the siege began to fall apart. What followed is the first known incidence of biological warfare: about to pull back and return to the east, the horde first gathered up the diseased bodies of their dead and catapulted them over the walls of Caffa.

Instantly, Pestilence struck Europe, and though it took around 15 years to cross Asia it would destroy Europe in less than five. As the horde went home, defeated, the Black Death ran around the coast of the Black Sea and straight through the Byzantine Empire (south of modern Bulgaria). By 1347 – just as Joan of England was departing her country to marry Prince Pedro of Castile and form a political alliance – it arrived on the Mediterranean and struck Messina in Sicily. Here, frightened peasants were beginning to realise that the disease arrived by sea and had started to refuse ships at the port, but it was a case of too little, too late.

Trading ships from Genoa and Constantinople carried the plague to the Italian mainland, where it ran up and down the infected rivers, canals and walkways. By 1348, 600 people were dying each day in Venice; Rhodes, Cyprus and Messina had all fallen. The invasion gathered pace and arrived in the heart of Europe, striking down 60 per cent of Marseilles' population and half of Paris'. The death toll was so high that the mayor of Bordeaux even set fire to the port.

England fared little better at the time. Arriving on the south coast in 1348 – primarily through ports like Bristol, Weymouth and London – the Black Death claimed 50 per cent of the population and reach a height of around 300 souls each day in London by spring 1349.

It was a staggering loss in this age of arable farming, when the majority of the country's wealth lay in the land. Acres and acres of golden cornfields were left without farmers to sow or plough them; knights and churchmen found themselves working by the sweat of their brows – and this led to the growth of the new yeoman class, as serf-less landowners were forced to rent their estates to the surviving farmers, whose labour was now very much in demand against crippling inflation and who became independent for the first time. This freed up capital and made it more economically mobile, possibly leading to the birth of a kind of proto-capitalism, but it also led to the proliferation of English 'lost villages'.

As well as being depopulated through disease, the estates of the rich also succumbed to the fat dowers of widows who were entitled, for life, to a third of their dead spouse's income. With the death rate increasing and ageing women gobbling up inheritances, young lords were as out of pocket as the poor and stood no better chance against Pestilence. While the chronic overpopulation in England before the Black Death meant that there was no initial effect on the labour market, by the next generation – the 1370s – there was a critical shortage. This led to the British government passing increasingly stringent regulations aimed at holding down rising wages, and ultimately to the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. The same was true elsewhere in Europe, with the effects of the Black Death also leading to the Jacquerie in France (1358) and the Revolt of the Ciompi in Italy (1378).

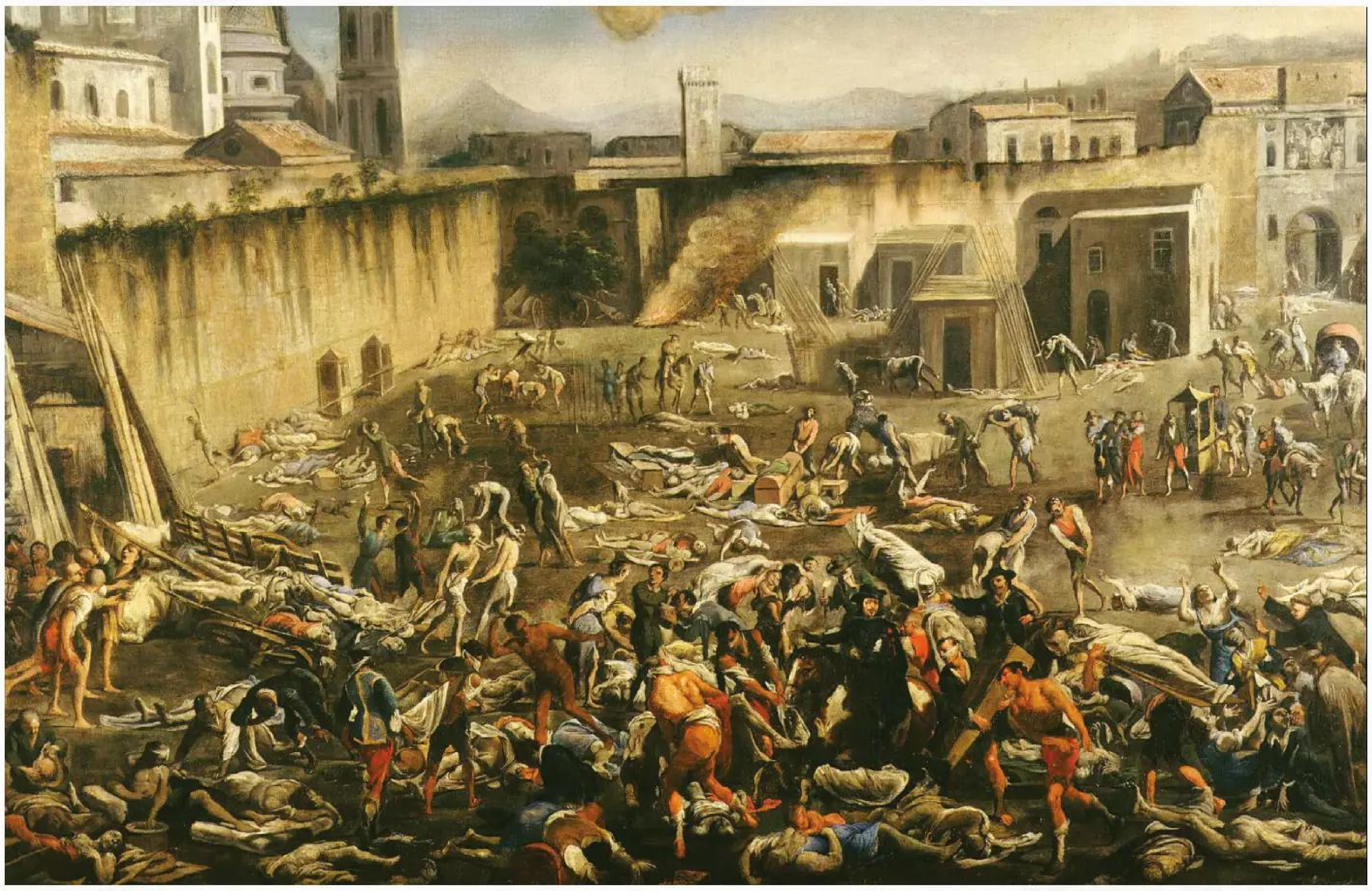
Despite the reassurance that the clergy provided, religion was powerless against the Black Death. Churchmen, who were often the closest thing to a doctor, were forbidden to dissect the bodies God made and so could not perform autopsies to learn the exact causes of death. Priests afraid of the

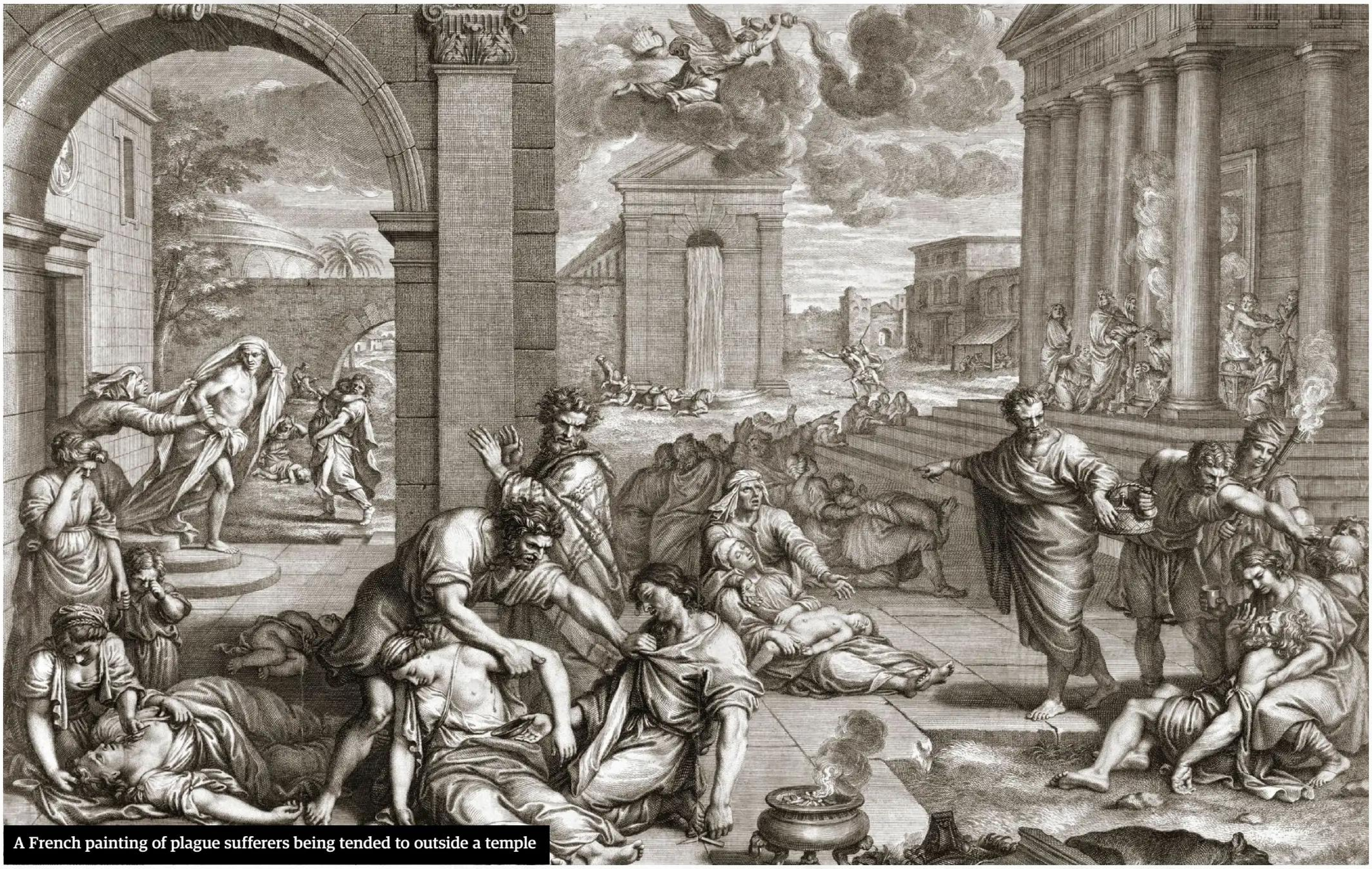
KILL OR CURE

A number of herbal treatments were thought to be effective against the Black Death. Sufferers were regularly prescribed, depending on their income, solutions of ground emeralds or potions made from the crushed shells of newly laid eggs mixed with chopped marigolds, ale and treacle. Treacle was, in fact, a leading remedy, though it allegedly had to be at least ten years old to have any potency. Another effective, if less appealing, curative was urine – two glasses a day was widely thought to strengthen the constitution and fend off disease.

Treatment of the buboes was a trickier affair. In their terror, people believed they could draw out Pestilence by holding bread against the boils and burying it – or, more incredibly, by strapping a live hen to the swelling, rinsing and repeating. Physicians later discovered that lancing buboes, draining the pus and applying poultices was relatively effective in the affliction's early stages. Such poultices usually consisted of tree resin, white lily root and then dried human excrement, arsenic or dried toad, depending on availability. Less extreme ointments were mixed from cooked onions, butter and garlic, while bloodletting through leeches or incisions and the application of clay and violets was also practised.

For the most part, since the Black Death was allegedly miasmatic, the best preventative measure was thought to be carrying pouches of sweet herbs and spices (or balls of perfume called pomanders), and burning them in your home. Most felt their only options were to fast, pray and join the Flagellants in order to do penance for their sins, and kill suspected witches or well-poisoners, while waiting for Saturn to move out of the House of Jupiter.





A French painting of plague sufferers being tended to outside a temple

"The plague had claimed an estimated 40 to 50 per cent of the European population – around 20 million people"

plague refused to administer last rites, and urged people to confess to each other. Funeral rites were similarly abandoned, with corpses stacked several layers deep with a smattering of earth between each row, and entrepreneurial peasants began to gather and bury the dead for a fee.

Eventually, the clergy refused bodies entry into cities and, since death had become such a constant companion, ordained that no funeral bells were to ring. In 1348, however, a much greater religious threat abounded. The Brotherhood of Flagellants rose up in Germany and led 1,000-strong marches through the country for 33 and a half days at a time (to mark the Saviour's years on Earth), brutally whipping themselves with iron-studded belts of leather to display their penance to God and earn protection from his wrath. They had something of a rock-star status and many people reached out to catch the sacred drops of blood that spattered from their holy wounds.

By 1349 the movement had petered out – falling prey to a bandwagon effect that led to too many misfits and vagabonds exploiting the Flagellants' notoriety – but the effect it had on public sentiment was grave. The reinforcement of extreme Christian ideology in the face of the apocalypse inflamed anti-Semitism across Europe and the Jews were persecuted like never before.

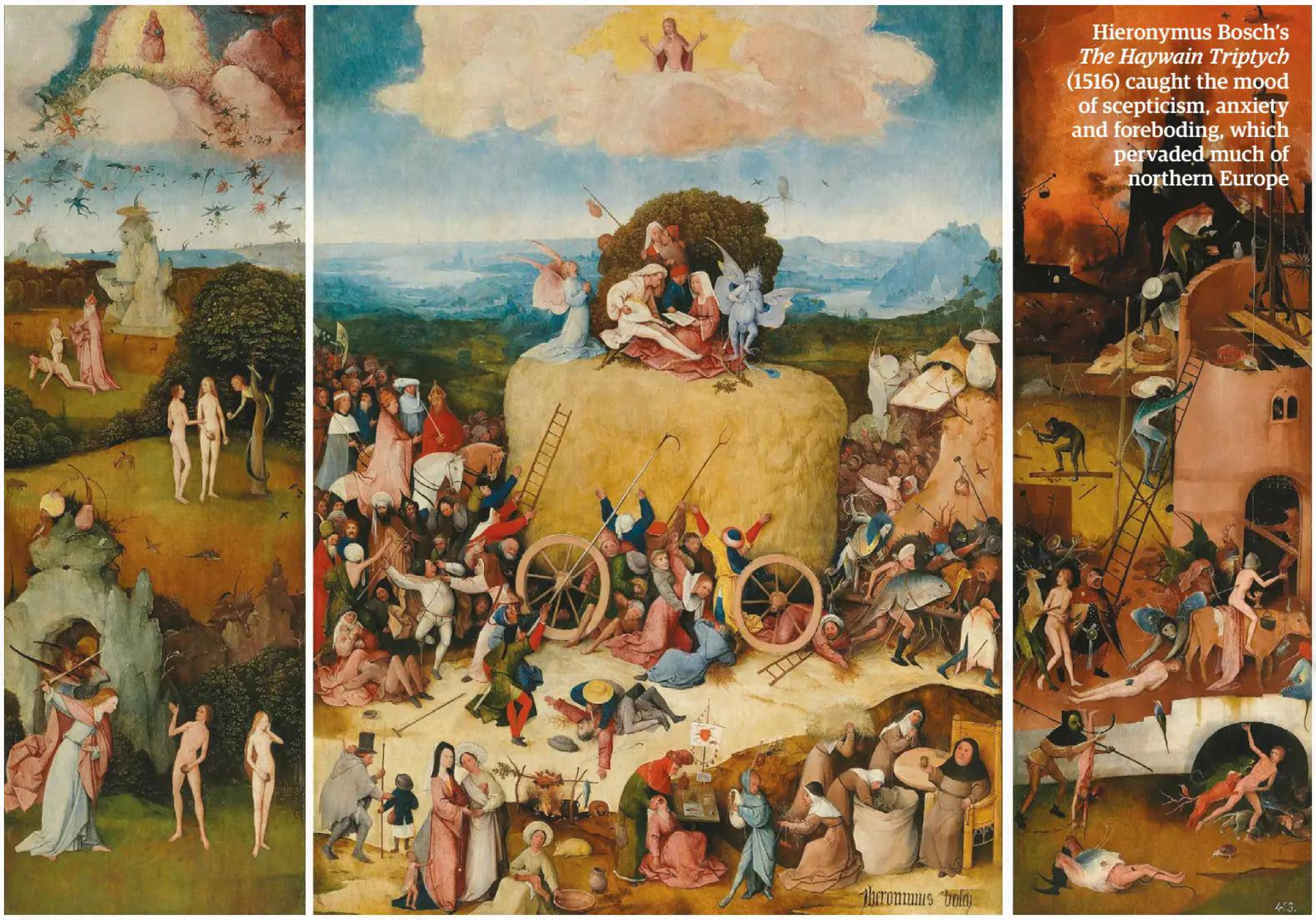
Associated as they were with the mystical Kabbalah (and black magic), the 2.5 million Jews living in Europe at the time were prime suspects for witchcraft and nefarious deeds. Having been strong international merchants in 1000, they were in a period of decline that would ultimately lead to their replacement in economic terms by Italian merchants by 1500. Divided and wandering across Europe, they were accused of brewing poisons from basilisk skin, spiders, lizards and frogs – even Christian hearts and the wafer of Christ – and then infecting wells with disease.

False confessions under torture, such as that of Agimet the Jew during the plague's peak in 1348, certainly didn't help matters, and on Valentine's Day of 1349 in Strasbourg 2,000 Jews were burned in a cemetery. The crime was repeated in other cities across Germany and Switzerland, prompting a mass Jewish migration across Europe.

It was to Poland that they fled, as King Casimir was in love with a Jewish woman and so opened the borders of his country to his lover's kinsmen, where they would remain until the Holocaust. Yet while the Jews were fleeing death and destruction at the hands of humans, the monster itself was winding down. Pestilence reached Sweden in 1350 and, by the time it got to Russia, the plague had all but passed in France and England.

Historians have never reached complete agreement on what exactly stopped the disease, though quarantines, slightly better hygiene and the reduced number of people travelling back and forth through Europe – as a result of mass depopulation and a growing fear of infected trade routes – are all thought to have played a role. The plague had claimed an estimated 40-50 per cent of the European population – that's around 20 million people. With war, death and famine also rampant in the century following the Black Death, it was as if the four horsemen themselves had ridden out in force to bring the whole of Europe to its knees. To a highly superstitious, God-fearing populace, it was a hell on Earth that they were utterly powerless to defend themselves against, and which would never be forgotten.

Images: Alamy, Getty Images



Hieronymus Bosch's *The Haywain Triptych* (1516) caught the mood of scepticism, anxiety and foreboding, which pervaded much of northern Europe

14TH-17TH CENTURY

THE RENAISSANCE

Explore the artistic and cultural rebirth that changed European civilisation forever

Written by Derek Wilson & Jessica Leggett

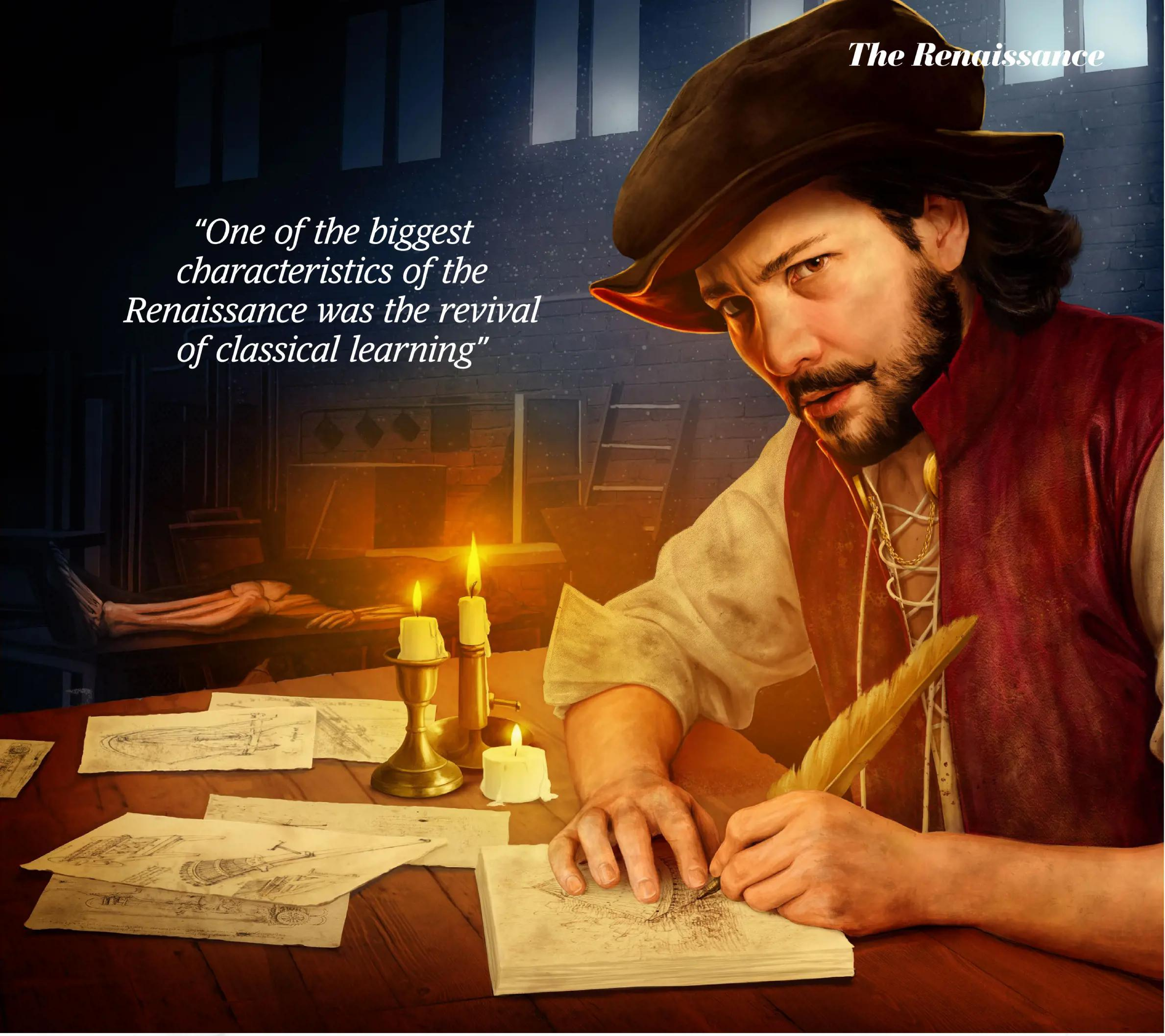
When it comes to pivotal moments in the history of Europe, the Renaissance is undoubtedly one of the greatest. A period of profound cultural and intellectual change that emerged in 14th-century Italy, it slowly spread across Europe and eventually ended in the early 17th century – although historians often debate these dates.

One of the biggest characteristics of the Renaissance was the revival of classical learning, with the rediscovery of literature from ancient Greece and Rome by authors such as Aristotle and Cicero. In particular, the renewed interest in classical antiquity led to the growth of humanism, a cultural movement that focused on the importance of the individual, their achievements and education, as well as using reason and observation of nature to understand the world around them.

Of all the Renaissance figures who embraced humanism, the most famous is arguably Leonardo da Vinci. A polymath with an interest in all manner of subjects, from engineering and science to art, architecture and anatomy, he is widely considered to be one of the greatest minds to have ever lived. His interest in humanism can be clearly seen in his many works, including in one of his most famous paintings, the *Mona Lisa*. Believed to have been painted from 1503 to 1519 (the year of Leonardo's death), the *Mona Lisa* is known for her enigmatic smile and direct gaze, with the naturalistic depiction of her features demonstrating Leonardo's scientific approach to his art. His use of sfumato, the technique of using subtle light and shadow to create soft transitions and a realistic appeance, to the three-quarter position of Mona Lisa, are just some of aspects that have influnenced both contemporary and modern artists ever since.

The embrace of humanism can also be seen in Renaissance archtecture. For example, Donato Bramante – one of the High Renaissance's most celebrated architects – was inspired by classical architecture to design neoclassical churches and public buildings in Rome, Milan, Florence and other Italian cities. For his designs, he utilised mathematical proportions to create symmetry and clarity in his architecture, reflecting the importance of the ideal form and geometric proportions that were key to classical thinkers like Vitruvius.

Moving away from Italy, art and architecture, the most revolutionary innovation of the Renaissance era began at Mainz in the German Rhineland



“One of the biggest characteristics of the Renaissance was the revival of classical learning”

when Johannes Gutenberg started producing printed sheets in 1439. The impact of cheap, mass-produced books made the interchange of ideas among scholars easy. It also led rapidly to woodblock printing of pictures to accompany text and as standalone illustrations. By 1500, print shops were to be found in 270 cities throughout Europe. They completely changed the way people thought. Some books were highly subversive of European culture and institutions. Sebastian Brant (1457-1521) of Strasbourg mocked contemporary institutions in his *Ship Of Fools*, and Dutch Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the leading humanist scholar of the age, followed suit with *In Praise Of Folly*. Both were runaway bestsellers. Their mood was caught by Hieronymus Bosch’s (1460-1516) *The Haywain Triptych*, which depicted all sorts and conditions of people trundling the wagon towards inevitable doom. Such ideas paved the way for the Reformation.

Among the early masters of woodblock and copperplate engraving was Martin Schongauer (c.1445-1491) of Colmar in Alsace. Italian sculptor and architect Michelangelo was one of his many admirers. When we look at his *Road To Calvary* it is not difficult to see why. In a space of 27.9 by 42.2 centimetres, he has arranged more than 50 figures, each with its own distinct function in the dismal cavalcade. Yet the page is not crammed with a jumble of men, women, children and animals. The artist creates an illusion of movement, while the fallen Christ remains the centre of the composition.

The greatest print maker of the Renaissance was Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). His frightening version of *The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse* (1498) is well known, but later works display his increasing mastery of a difficult medium. With only a group of burins (engravers’ cutting tools), the challenges were considerable: how to display various textures, show the play of light and shade, outline the contours of human and animal bodies and so on. He worked in various mediums – pen and ink, watercolour and oil paint, as well as engraving – and his prodigious output embraced religious works, portraiture, animal studies, mythology and landscapes. He was, in fact, one of the first to treat landscape as a subject on its own, rather than as a background to the portrayal of religious events.

Dürer’s home town of Nuremberg had strong contacts with the Republic of Venice. The road between the two cities was the main mercantile link between north and south. Dürer visited Venice twice during the early years of the 16th century, and executed commissions there. He

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

met and learned from some of the Italian masters with whom he long remained in correspondence. He was particularly influenced by Mantegna and Raphael (who had, at last, cracked the problem of perspective in such works as *The School Of Athens*). But the learning process was not a one-way street; Dürer was widely respected and copied by his peers south of the Alps.

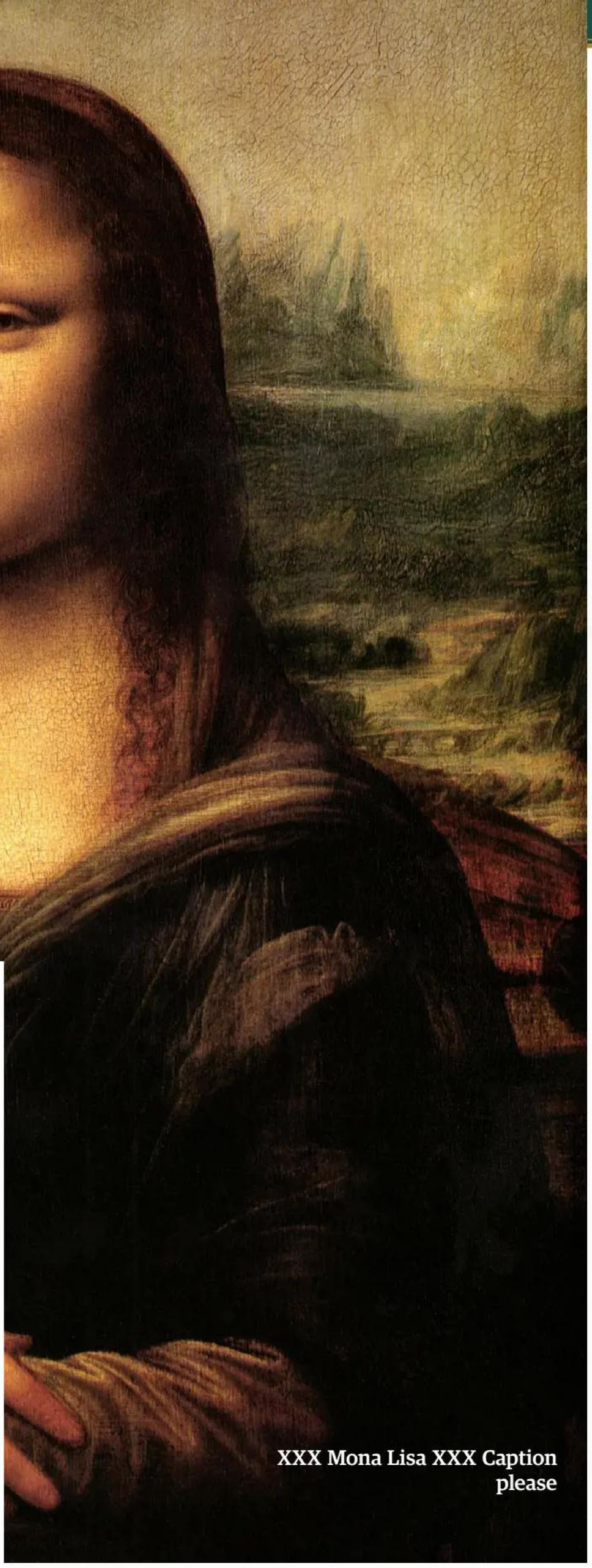
Dürer's involvement in the international art scene also took him to the Netherlands in 1520-21. What Venice was to Mediterranean and eastern commerce, Antwerp was to the cross-Channel trade with England and the new Atlantic routes now being opened up by Spanish and Portuguese mariners. Here, eager patrons were to be found among the growing middle class, and Dürer was far from being the only foreign artist drawn there. Several Italians were among the artistic communities in Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels and other cities. The existence of both commercial and artistic networks ensured the sharing of new ideas.

> *"Commercial and artistic networks ensured the sharing of new ideas"*

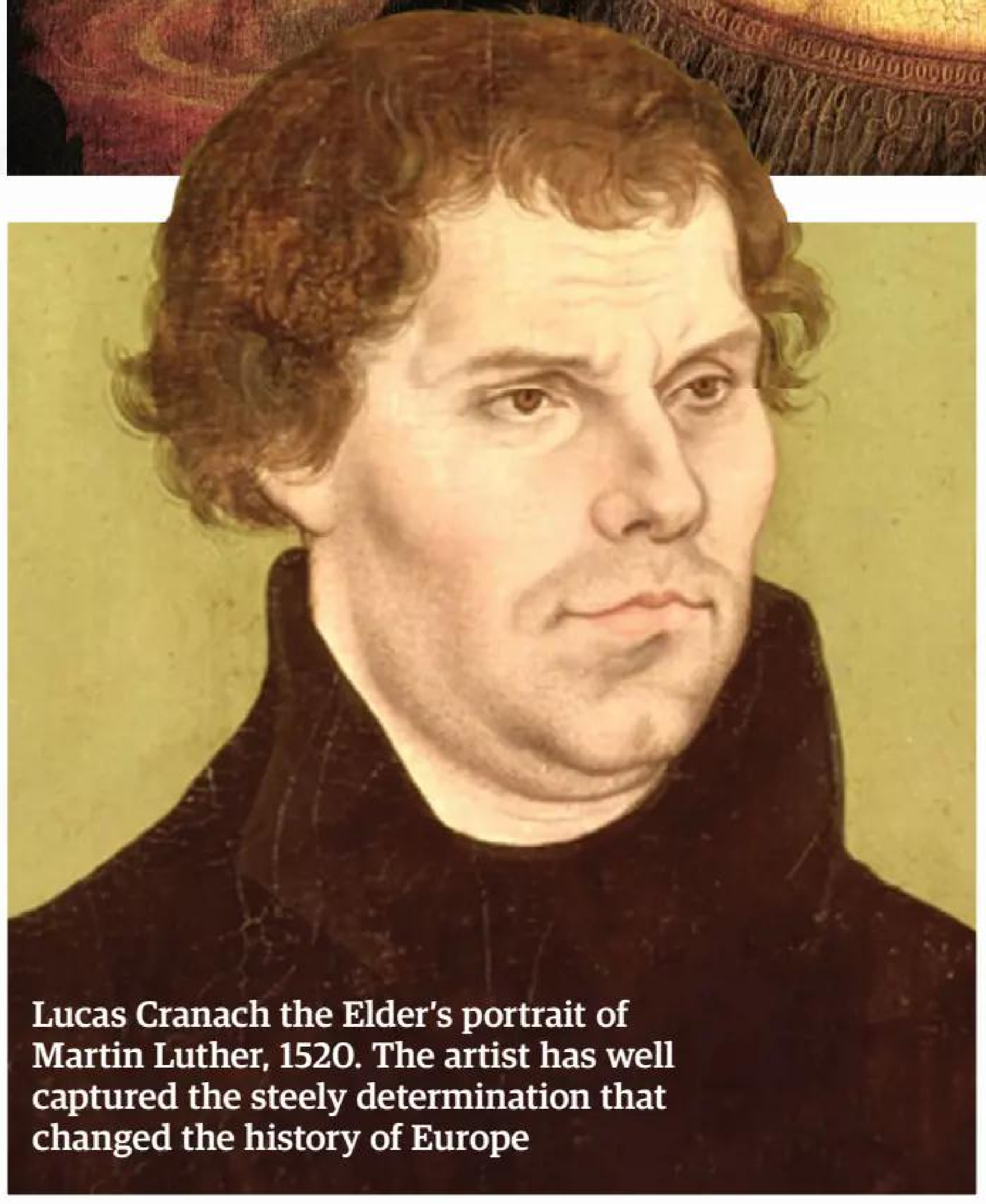
In 1506, when a Flemish wool merchant visiting Florence saw Michelangelo's latest version of the *Madonna And Child*, he bought it and had it shipped back to his local church in Bruges.

Another German artist who followed a career not dissimilar to Dürer's was Hans Holbein the Younger (1497-1543). His home was in Augsburg, the financial centre of Europe, dominated by the banking families of Fugger and Welser. Hans was born into a family of artists, brought up with his brother in their father's atelier, working on commissions for everything from altarpieces and jewellery designs to trade signboards and decorated house fronts. In 1516, bankruptcy forced the family to move to Basel. In this liberal, free-thinking city, young Hans found an atmosphere conducive to his advancement. Sseveral scholars, such as Erasmus, and artists of all persuasions who congregated there. But times were changing.

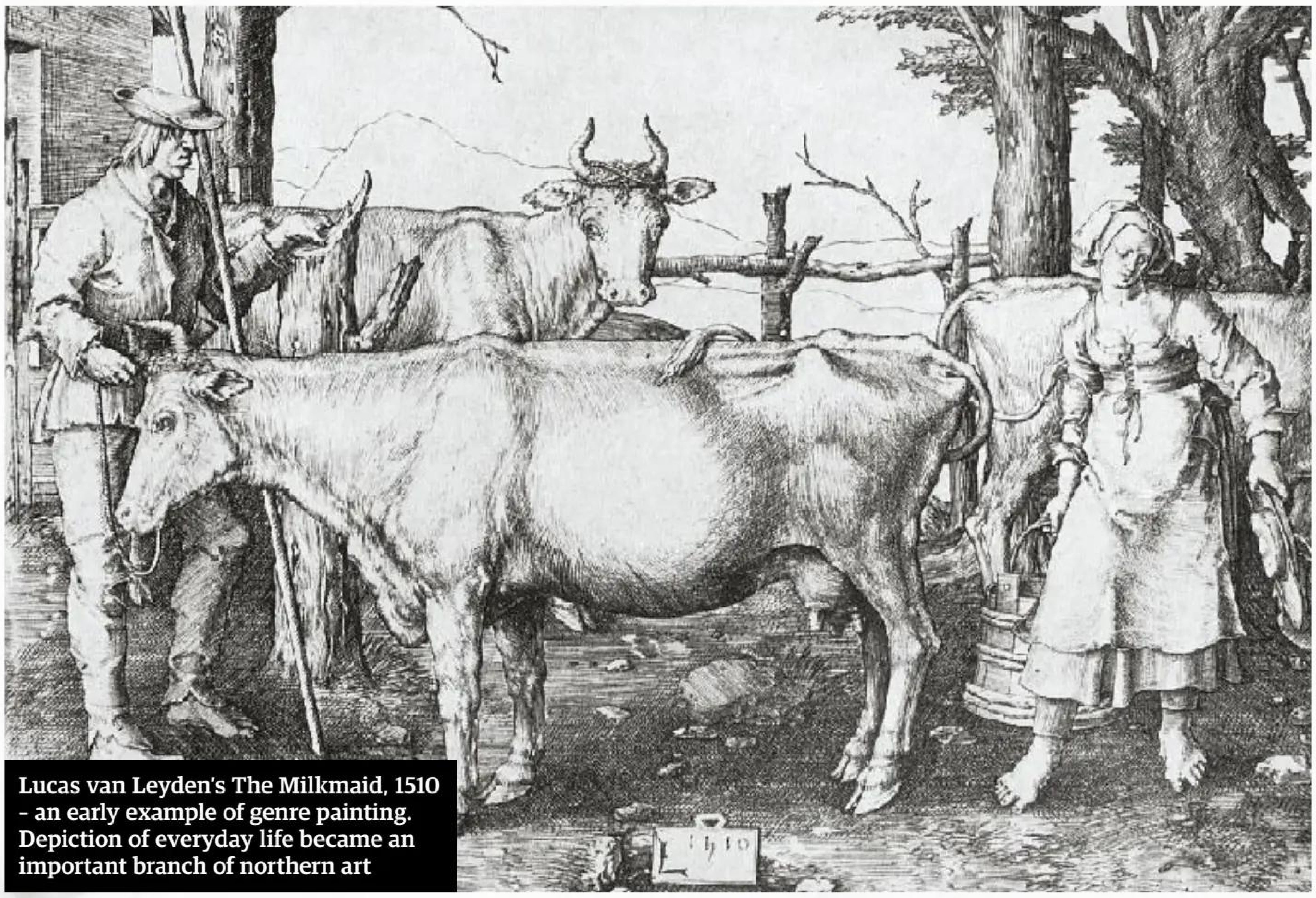
In 1517 in Saxony, a monk called Martin Luther mounted a challenge to Catholic dogma that was the beginning of the Reformation. Hans junior was now a young man whose precocious gifts were resulting in a variety of commissions. But the market was changing rapidly. As Protestantism spread, its more extreme advocates were proclaiming that religious art was idolatry. One of the cities that fell under their control was Basel. This put a distinct dampener on the demand for religious works. Holbein had to look farther afield for a patron. Thanks to Erasmus, who wrote a letter of recommendation to his friend, Thomas More, Holbein was well received in England in 1526. He spent most of the rest of his life there, becoming



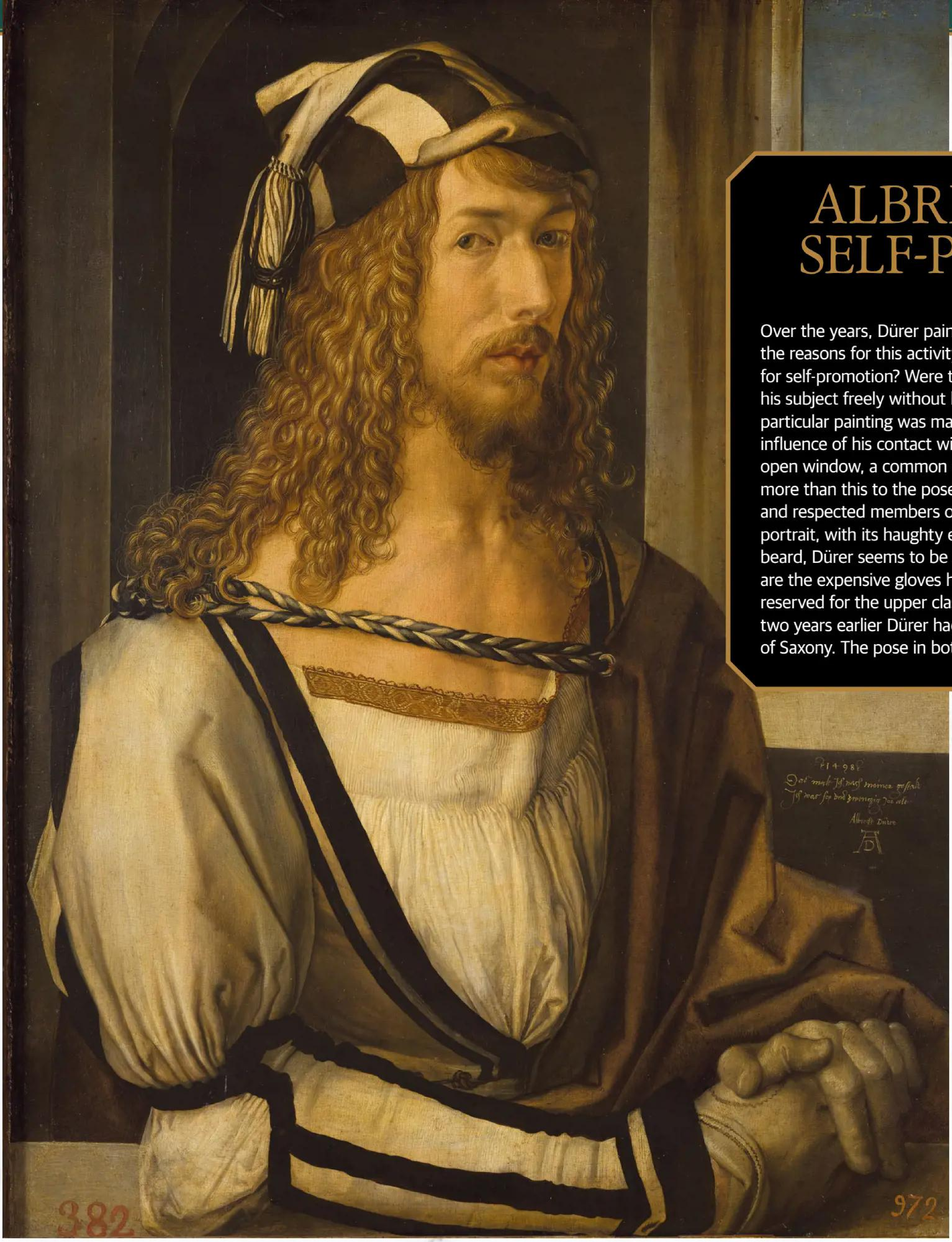
XXX Mona Lisa XXX Caption please



Lucas Cranach the Elder's portrait of Martin Luther, 1520. The artist has well captured the steely determination that changed the history of Europe



Lucas van Leyden's The Milkmaid, 1510 – an early example of genre painting. Depiction of everyday life became an important branch of northern art



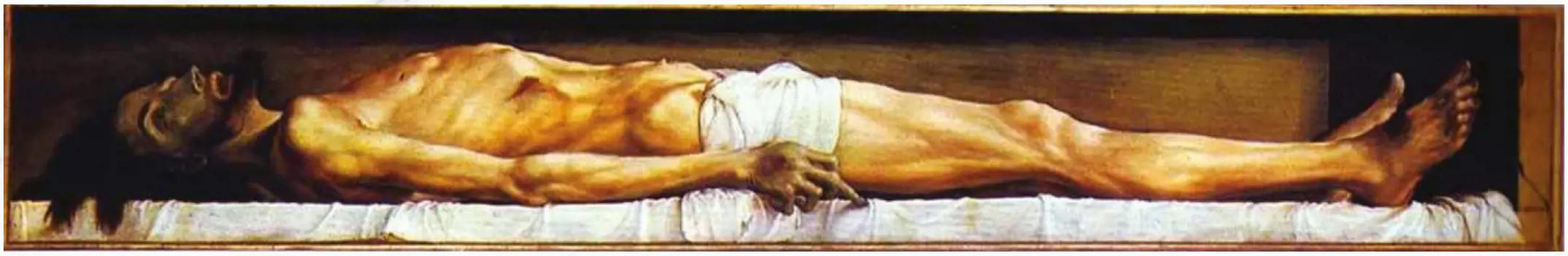
ALBRECHT DÜRER: SELF-PORTRAIT, 1498

Over the years, Dürer painted a number of self-portraits. We can only guess at the reasons for this activity. Were they gifts for friends or admirers? Were they for self-promotion? Were they painterly exercises, enabling the artist to interpret his subject freely without having to worry about the demands of a client? This particular painting was made after his first visit to Italy, and it certainly shows the influence of his contact with southern conventions. He is shown sitting beside an open window, a common device popular with Florentine painters. Yet, there is more than this to the pose. In Italy, Dürer discovered that artists were honoured and respected members of society rather than mere craftsmen. In his new portrait, with its haughty expression, extravagant fashionable dress, long hair and beard, Dürer seems to be making a bid for recognition. Particularly significant are the expensive gloves he is wearing. Gloves were definitely an accoutrement reserved for the upper classes – people who did not work with their hands. Only two years earlier Dürer had executed a portrait of the Elector Frederick the Wise of Saxony. The pose in both paintings is almost identical.

official painter to Henry VIII, and producing the superb series of portraits of the king and members of his court that we know so well.

The impact of the Reformation on art was twofold. As conflict grew between Catholic and Protestant states, and between confessional groups within states, art became a propaganda vehicle. Artists including Holbein produced, at government behest, prints lampooning the pope and illustrations for vernacular Bibles. In Germany, Lucas Cranach (1472-1553) brought painting to the aid of the new theology with works such as *The Law And The Gospel*, seeking to counteract the imagery that had been used for centuries by the old church to implant Lutheran doctrine in the minds of worshippers.

The other result was the divorce of sacred and secular, which allowed the development of subject matter such as portraits, landscapes, still life and genre works (scenes from everyday life), characterising the next era of European art.



HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER: THE DEAD CHRIST *(1520-22)*

This is Renaissance realism at its most direct and forceful. Traditional depictions of post-Crucifixion scenes had been intent on conveying different messages. When painters, at the behest of their ecclesiastical clients, portrayed the 'descent from the Cross' or the 'entombment', they showed distraught disciples and Jesus' mother caring reverently for the body. They invited the beholder to identify with those first followers of Christ, the original members of the Church. They suggested the viewer's appropriate response. Holbein would have none of this. He presents stark reality, and leaves the spectator to make of it what he or she will. He asks the question: What happened between Good Friday and Easter Sunday? The answer is: Death. The figure lying in a coffin-shaped space might be any man. Corpses were occasionally dragged out of the Rhine. Perhaps this was one such, fortuitously available for Holbein to study. Perhaps he found his model in an anatomy school. The message was simple but profound: this God-man died. This underlines Christ's full humanity, and makes the Resurrection more remarkable. Here, Holbein shows himself to be a man of Renaissance and of the emerging Reformation. One turned away from medieval imagery to locate religious events in the real world. The other stressed the importance of the plain Bible text, unadorned by theological accretions. Renaissance realism has different aspects. It may be simply portraying something accurately, making it familiar. Or it may startle the viewer into a new understanding. In the north, there was a long tradition of strange, sometimes gruesome, religious images. Holbein brings these two realisms together, inviting the viewer's personal response. That is why this painting has had such an impact down the centuries.

c.1440-1450s

THE PRINTING PRESS

Discover how Johannes Gutenberg changed the entire history of Europe

Written by Mark Dolan

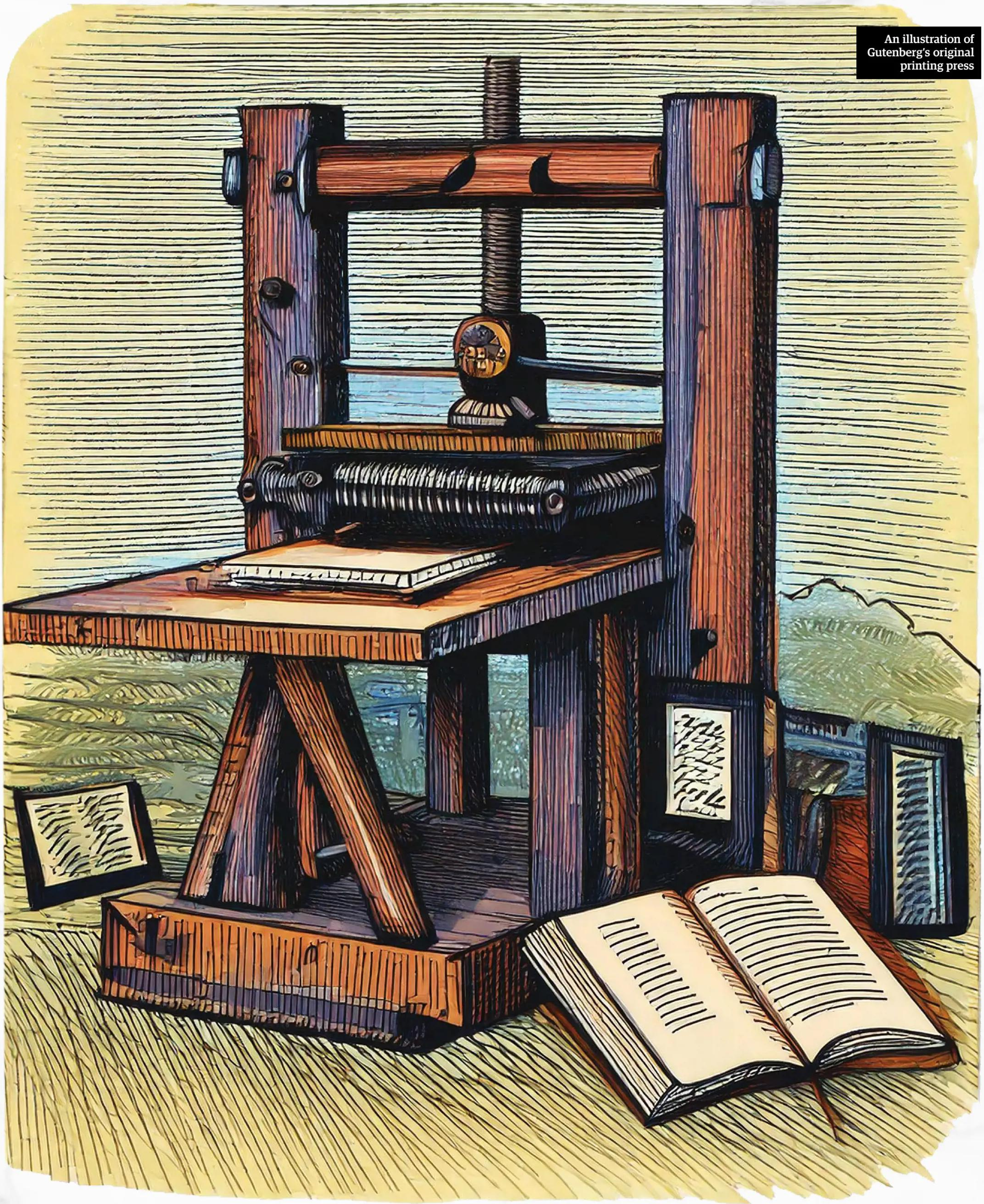
Few inventions have had as much of an impact on the history of an entire continent as the printing press. Although printing presses had been invented previously in China in the first millennium, they had used variously baked clay or wooden blocks for the type, and hadn't made their way to Europe. The key figure in revolutionising printing was Johannes Gutenberg. Born in Mainz, Germany, to a middle class merchant family at the end of the 14th century, local records indicate that Gutenberg trained as a goldsmith in his youth. Although evidently, Gutenberg did not pursue a career as a goldsmith, this education had a huge impact, as one of the most important innovations that Gutenberg made, which had not been made in China, was the use of a metal alloy for the creation of the type that was used in his press.

> It is estimated that Gutenberg printed around 180 copies of the Gutenberg Bible, with 49 copies surviving to this day

It is known that Gutenberg invented his press somewhere around 1450, but many of the details are unknown. We don't know exactly what it looked like or how it worked, but one idea is that it was initially based on contemporary wine presses. The key to his genius was the combination of movable metal type, the press, and printer's ink. Most of the details we actually have surrounding the earliest version of Gutenberg's press come from court documents while he battled a lawsuit from the brother of his late business partner, who had requested to join the project but been refused. The documents mentioned "the press" and some undefined "objects". The latter were probably the first metal type characters, the Donatus und Kalender, or D-K type.

One of the earliest publications to (probably) come from Gutenberg's press was the *Donatus*, a standard textbook that was printed in Gutenberg's D-K type, though this first type was somewhat crude and the books produced did not reach the aesthetic ideals that he aspired to. He managed to attract the financial support of a businessman and financier from his hometown of Mainz, Johannes Fust. Fust saw the commercial potential of Gutenberg's idea and funded new materials to improve his press. The result was one of the most renowned books ever created: the *Gutenberg Bible*.

Then called the '42-line Bible', as the text was laid out in two 42-line columns and perfectly justified (a feat nigh impossible working in manuscript), it was printed in a brand new type, created specifically for the Bible. Wanting to replicate the appearance of the books he knew, those written in manuscript, Gutenberg based his script on the Gothic Textura style, which was common in liturgical texts. In addition, while most copies of the book were printed on good-quality paper, many were also printed on vellum (thinly stretched calfskin), which not only gave the production a very high quality, but meant that the final product looked visually striking.



An illustration of Gutenberg's original printing press

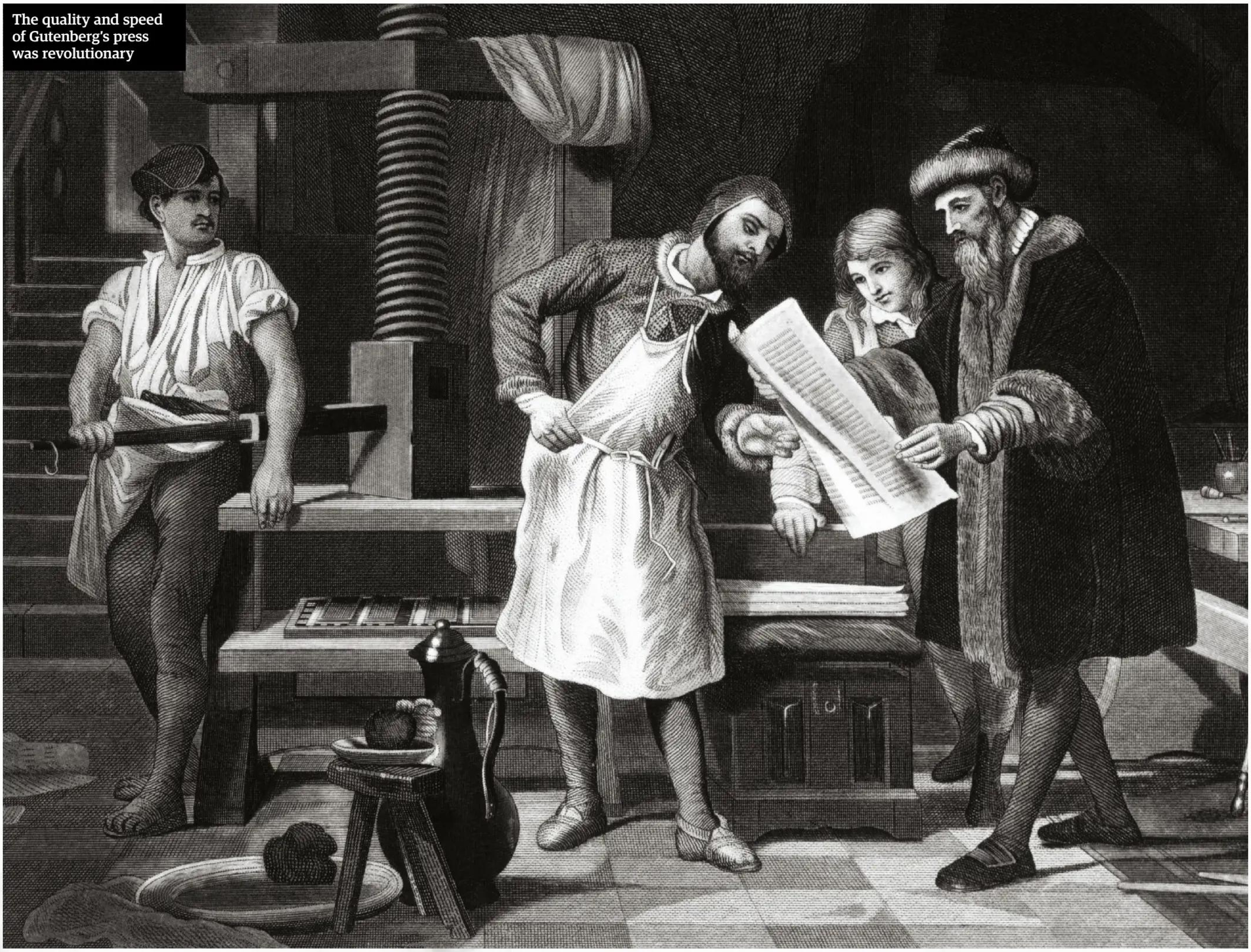
Image: AI Generated using Adobe Firefly

The two hallmarks of Gutenberg's press, and the qualities that made it so influential, were the quality of the work it could produce, and the quantity of its output. His press spread the ink evenly across the type, creating consistent results and very clear, readable text. This, coupled with the sharpness of his new metal type – which some scholars have speculated made use of a sand-casting technique – meant that his books were comparable in quality to carefully produced manuscripts. Where manuscripts were a huge, slow and labour intensive undertaking, Gutenberg's press was able to produce many more copies of each book much more quickly, and the metal type did not wear out like wooden type did; it could be used hundreds of times without compromising quality. Unfortunately by 1455, when Fust demanded his money and interest from Gutenberg, he was unable to pay, despite the success of the Bible. After further court proceedings, all of Gutenberg's equipment and his printing house – the Humbrechthof – was handed over to Fust and his adoptive son, Peter Schöffer, who was a calligrapher. Gutenberg seems to have continued printing in some capacity until 1460, but after this point he produced nothing more, dying eight years later. However, despite this being the end of Gutenberg's work, it was only the beginning of his invention's importance.

Schöffer was a successful printer, and was even regarded as a technically better printer than Gutenberg. He produced a renowned version of the Book of Psalms using the press, but it wasn't until the technology was brought to Italy that its true potential began to show. First arriving in Venice in 1465, printers were able to utilise the city's role as one of the Mediterranean's primary trade hubs to disseminate books produced using the press. The Italian printers were able to print a run of 200 or so copies of a book more quickly than ever before, and send a small number of copies with various ships to destinations throughout Europe. These channels spread literature to different parts of Europe and sparked a printing revolution. For the first time, books were available not just to learned institutions and the very wealthy, but to people from different socio-economic backgrounds.

The availability of new information and ideas across Europe allowed for the sharing of novel concepts and challenges to the status quo, while the new industry paved the way for the printing of all kinds of material, from poetry to cookery books,

> *"These channels spread literature to different parts of Europe and sparked a printing revolution"*

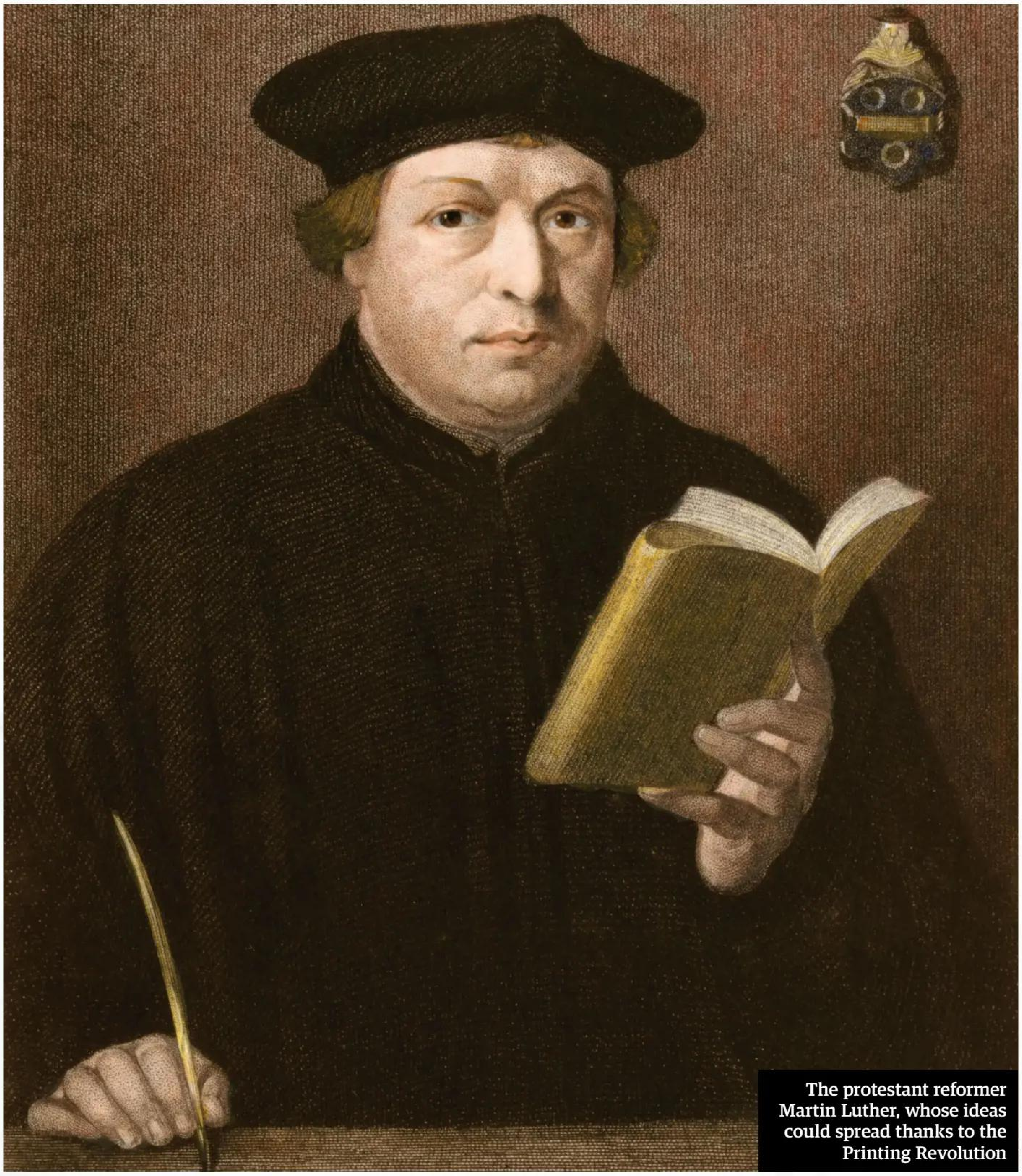


The quality and speed of Gutenberg's press was revolutionary travel guides to novels. Literacy rates increased, the price of books decreased, religious texts could be read more widely, and creative people could earn a living from writing.

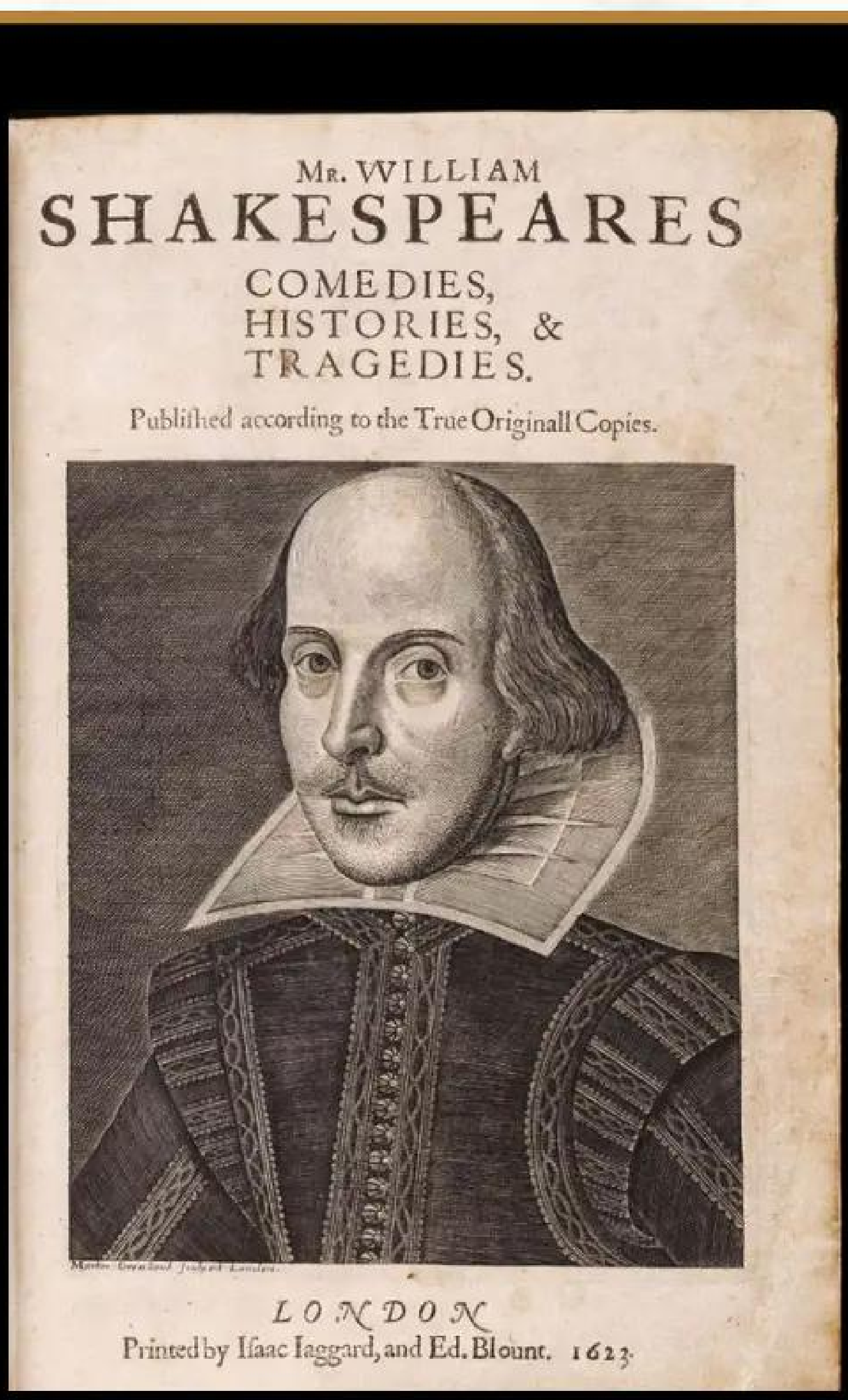
Another area where the printing press was revolutionary was in the burgeoning Italian Renaissance. One of the most significant figures in this, although not particularly well-known today, was Aldus Manutius. Manutius set up a press in Venice in the 1490s, the Aldine Press, which was responsible for two key innovations. The first was the content that Manutius' press produced. Due to his personal interests in the work of the Classical authors, the likes of Homer, Aristotle, and Virgil, the press produced editions of their works in contemporary Italian, allowing their literary achievements to gain new prominence at the height of the Renaissance. The ideas of these ancient authors were very important in the new intellectual and cultural landscape of Europe.

The Aldine Press' second great innovation was a logistical one. Gutenberg's Bible was a huge volume, printed on what's known as Royal paper (50x63cm (20x25in)) and folded once, making it a folio. Although impressive and beautiful, it would not have been easy to read. The Aldine Press introduced the octavo book, where the paper is folded eight times, making a much smaller and more portable final book. This made their work much easier to carry around and read, and essentially invented the book as we know it today: the common paperback you'd see in a bookshop is octavo size. Manutius also added one more innovation to the history of typography, as his press was the first to ever print in an italic script.

Throughout the 16th century, the influence of the printing press grew. It facilitated the spread of ideas that would transform Europe, from the advent of Protestantism via works by John Calvin and Martin Luther, to the revolutionary scientific ideas of Copernicus and Galileo. It could be said that no invention had such an effect on Europe's development than Gutenberg's moveable metal type and wine press-inspired printing process.



The protestant reformer Martin Luther, whose ideas could spread thanks to the Printing Revolution



Mr. WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARES
COMEDIES,
HISTORIES, &
TRAGEDIES.
Publiſhed according to the True Originall Copies.

LONDON
Printed by Iſaac Iaggard, and Ed. Blount. 1623.

PRINTING SHAKESPEARE

Without the Printing Revolution, Shakespeare's work could have been lost forever

Before Gutenberg, the amount of time and effort it took to produce a book meant that they were reserved for very select works, essentially the Bible and the works of some of the greatest of the Ancient Greek and Roman writers. They would be written in Vulgate Latin, incomprehensible to the majority of people, and beautifully illuminated. The printing press changed all this, and suddenly writing that had been considered unsuitable for professional production began to find its way into the pages of books. One genre of literature that was considered a far cry from respectable was the humble play. In the 16th century, plays were written quickly, often adapted by the actors, and never properly published.

In an indirect way, we have Gutenberg to thank that we still have access to the plays of Shakespeare. There were no intellectual property laws at the time, and so anyone was able to print a version of Shakespeare's work, complete with whatever edits they thought prudent. Sometimes these would be written by actors from the plays, sometimes with edits they'd made in their performances, or even half-remembered scripts from audience members.

After Shakespeare's death in 1616, two actors, John Heminges and Henry Condell, decided to pull together all the circulating versions of Shakespeare's plays and print them together as a single volume. Approximately 750 copies of the *First Folio* were printed in 1623, and it was thanks to this, and three following *Folios*, that Shakespeare's works could be read so widely and have the impact on the English language that they have had over the last 400 years.

Images: Alamy

1453

THE ROMAN EMPIRE'S LAST STAND

For 600 years, the Ottomans dreamed of seizing Constantinople, the wealthiest city in the world. In 1453, both sides prepared for a decisive showdown

Written by David Crookes

Sultan Mehmed II took his position on a small mound in sight of the walls of the ancient city of Constantinople. Those tasked with defending the city – the stronghold of Orthodox Christianity – from the waves of invaders that threatened her could clearly see his location as they peered across from the city walls over an incredible number of tents situated barely 230 metres (750 feet) away.

The tents were arranged in clusters. At the centre of each was the makeshift home of an officer, on top of each a defiant flag fluttering in the wind against the Sea of Marmara. The 21-year old sultan's ceremonial red-and-gold tent lay further back, its grandeur befitting that of the Ottoman Empire's leader. The sight of some 60,000 soldiers, together with thousands more, helping to keep them well tooled and fed was chilling for the city's inhabitants. For the leader of Constantinople – the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos – the purpose of the gathering within spitting distance of the city to which he had dedicated his life was clear. War was inevitable, and his forces were outnumbered ten to one.

Mehmed was conscious of the need for a swift war, given the logistics involved with keeping such a large army fed. He had made Constantine an offer; surrender the city and he could keep his life and rule in the smaller town of Mystras. The Emperor refused: "To surrender the city to you is beyond my authority or anyone else's who lives in it, for all of us, after taking the mutual decision, shall die out of free will without sparing our lives."

On 6 April 1453, the first attack came, light artillery firing at Constantinople. Soldiers pushed forward, trying to break through the city's walls, but the defenders proved strong. They repelled the invading Ottoman army, causing many casualties. Even as cracks appeared in the walls, and fortresses on Bosphorus were taken, Mehmed realised it wasn't going to be easy to break the city. With even greater force needed, he called upon something with huge firepower; a weapon that was to shake Constantinople like an earthquake.

Constantine XI understood the importance of his city. It was the gateway to Europe, an impregnable walled city that for 1,000 years had been besieged 23 times with just one success, at the hands of the Christian knights of the Fourth Crusade in 1203. Crucially, Constantinople – so important to the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine Empire as it later became known – was the centre for trade and previously the world's largest and richest city. It had stood firm in the face of the Ottoman Empire that had expanded all around it, leaving it isolated in the middle of Europe and Asia.

Constantinople was the focus of much jealousy among rival leaders who wanted to conquer what had become the last outpost of the once-mighty Roman Empire. Followers of Islam had lain siege on Constantinople between 674 and 678, trying again in 717 and 718. Christian Europe feared the fall of Constantinople, believing it would open the way for Islamic dominance. Even though the city saw off the attempted conquest, the death of Islamic martyrs helped make it a holy place, and the need to try again in the future burned deep.

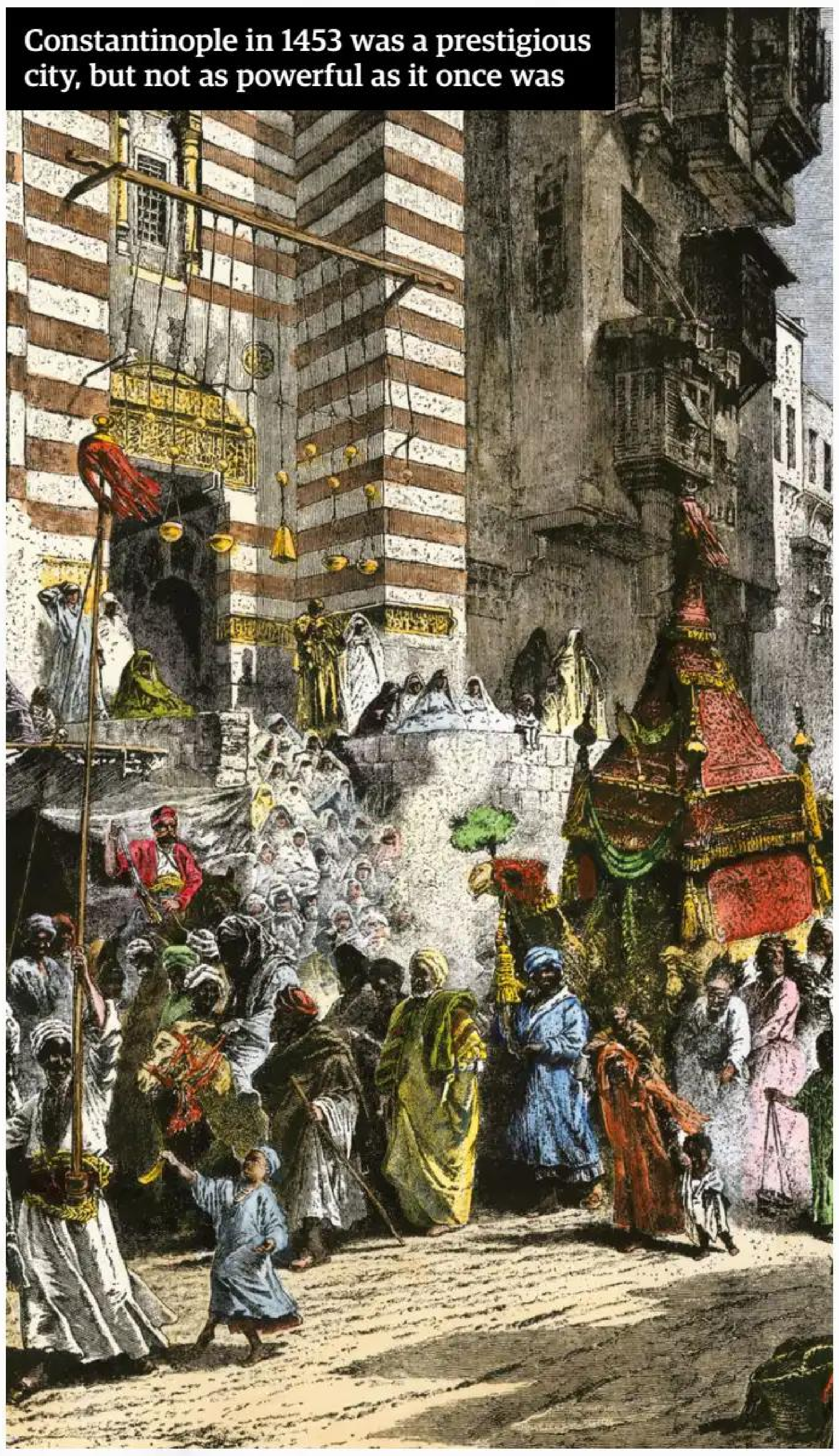
Yet for hundreds of years the main threat to Constantinople as the centre for the Orthodox Church had come from Rome, the centre of the Catholic Church. The Fourth Crusade had devastated Constantinople's power and riches and so, by 1453, it was a pale shadow of its former self. By this point the Byzantine Empire – which at its height had included most of the Mediterranean

Constantinople was an impregnable walled city that for 1,000 years had been besieged 23 times with just one success

> *"Soldiers pushed forward, trying to break through the city's walls, but the defenders proved strong"*

After a protracted battle, the Ottomans overran Constantinople in 1453

Images: Alamy, REX


Constantinople in 1453 was a prestigious city, but not as powerful as it once was

coast – consisted of Constantinople and a few square miles outside. It might have lost its true power but its location and history meant it was still desirable. Mehmed wanted it badly.

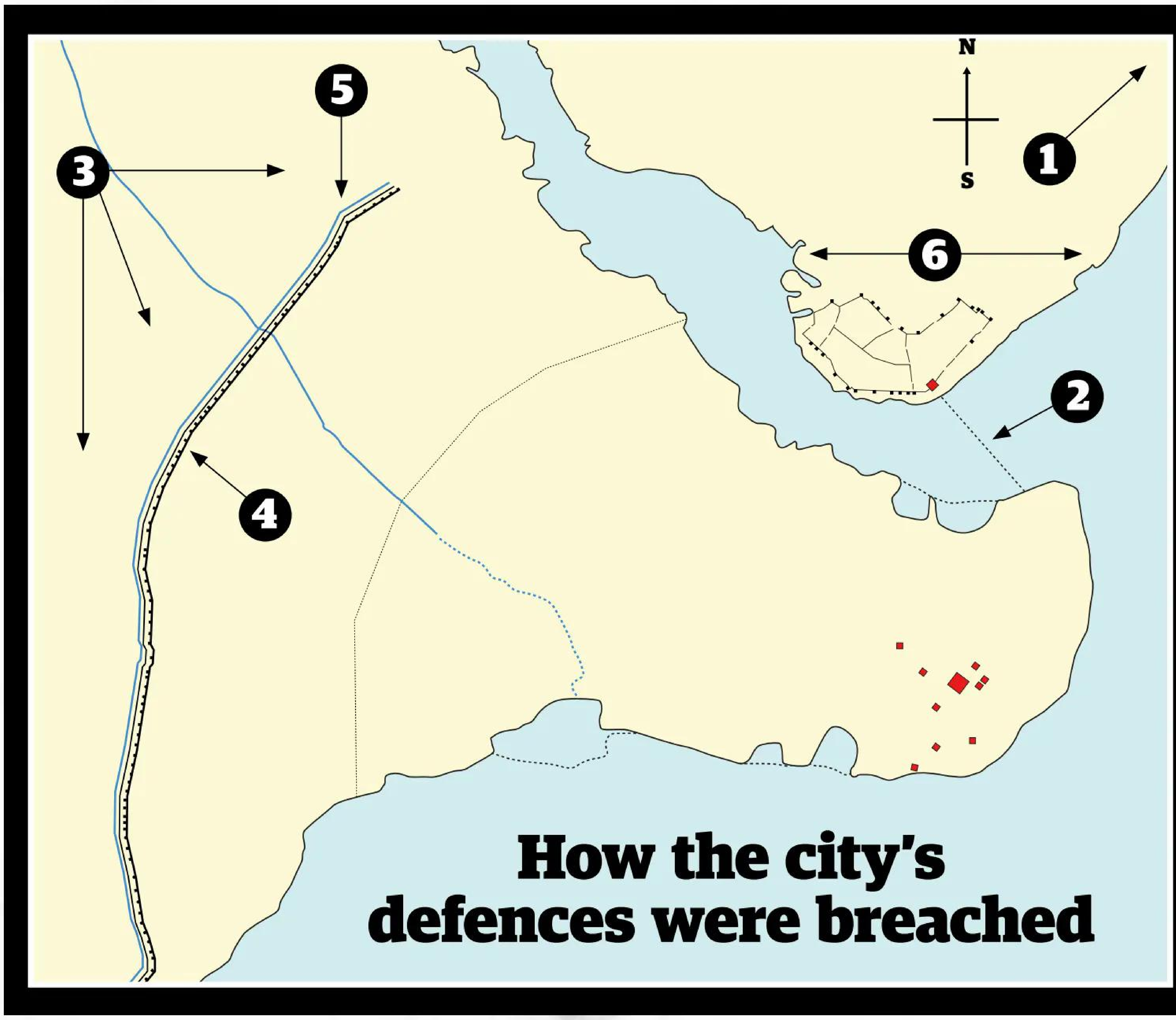
The sultan was determined to succeed where his predecessors had failed. He had come to power thanks to his father, Murat, who had negotiated a ten-year truce with Christian crusaders intent on invasion. Mehmed had come to hold a desire to be the heir to the Roman Empire and extend his influence. He wanted one faith, one empire and one sovereignty in the world and by 1453, the time was right. Constantine XI had none of the power of those that had gone before him and the city, with its population of 100,000, was bankrupt. Constantinople had been paying vast sums to the Ottoman Empire as a way of avoiding invasion but this only served to financially cripple it. Now the enemy was camped on its doorstep, ready to unleash hell. The 49-year-old Constantine knew the chances of his small army holding out were slim but vowed to fight to his last breath.

Constantine had made representations to the Pope, knowing that an attack by the Ottoman forces could only be held off for so long. They needed reinforcements from the West to help tackle the threat. A union between the two churches was celebrated at the end of 1452, but despite the promise of warships, none arrived in the following months and with no help coming, Constantine stepped up the work of repairing and reinforcing the city's walls.

The last outpost of the Roman Empire was ringed by 19 kilometres (12 miles) of perimeter walling, most of it faced the edge of the sea. On the northern side was a chain that had been placed across the mouth of the Golden Horn, the primary inlet leading to a large harbour-like body of water. It prevented enemy ships from sailing past the northern part of Constantinople and was an important part of the city's defences. Constantine's strategy was to put a greater emphasis on the 6.5 kilometres (four miles) of land-locked perimeter wall, but he didn't know about the latest weapon that was about to be unveiled by his savvy enemy.

Mehmed enjoyed the discovery of new things and so was rather taken by a proposal to create a cannon larger than any other that had been built. This, he surmised, would be perfect to smash the famous walls of Constantinople.

Gunpowder had been available since around the 11th century – it appears on the Song Dynasty text Wujing Zongyao – so its power was not unknown. The Ottomans' new weapon was different, though. It was devised by an engineer called Orban, who had visited Constantinople from the Kingdom of Hungary and was taken on by Constantine to develop new weaponry. The infrequent payments forced him to seek employment with Mehmed and he promised the sultan he could make a weapon



How the city's defences were breached

1. Rumeli Hisari (Fortress of Europe)

Winter 1451: Nicknamed Bozaz Kesen (meaning throat-cutter), Mehmed II ordered the building of a magnificent castle with 7.6m (25ft) thick walls. Situated at the narrowest point of the Bosphorus Strait, its inhabitants used it to cut supplies to Constantinople.

2. The chain

2 April 1453: Constantine XI ensured the centuries-old chain was strung across the mouth of the Golden Horn in Constantinople as the Ottoman army camped on their doorstep. It prevented enemy ships from entering the inlet.

3. Enemy camp

2 April 1453: The Ottoman Turks together with a European army camped outside the city walls, the European army to the north of the river, the Janissaries in the middle protecting Mehmed, and the Anatolian army further down.

4. Theodosian Wall

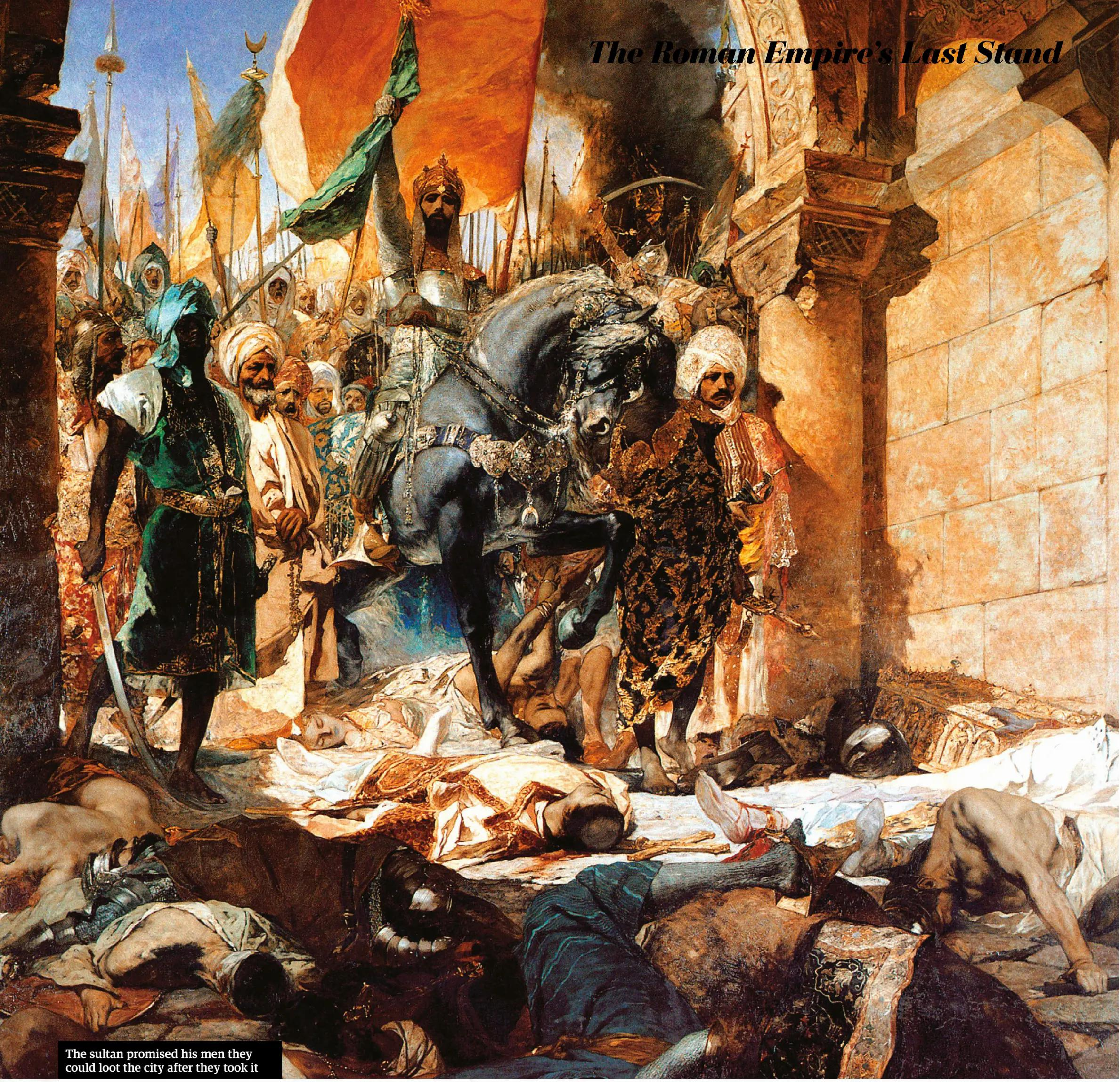
6 April to 29 May 1453: This 6.5km (4mi) stretch of land-locked wall was the primary target for the advancing enemy. They struck it with cannon fire and tried to breach it several times before finally succeeding on 29 May 1453.

5. The moat

The moat had been added in the fifth century and it was an extra barrier between any invading army and the city walls. It was around 20m (66ft) wide and 7m (23ft) deep. The Ottoman Turks tried desperately to fill it and allow for a safe and easy passage.

6. Bypassing the chain

22 April 1453: With the chain blocking access to the Golden Horn, Mehmed II ordered the ships to be carried over land instead. In the dead of night, they were pulled over difficult ground using log rollers and relaunched into the water.



The sultan promised his men they could loot the city after they took it

large enough to fire a huge stone that would demolish the city's walls.

Orban was given an abundance of money and the materials to build his super cannon. It took him three months to make the giant weapon, the end result being a monster that was 8.2 metres (27 feet) long and capable of hurling a 272-kilogram (600-pound) stone ball over an incredible 1.6 kilometres (one mile). When it hit the walls of Constantinople, the shock waves were immense. Constantine's men struggled in the face of the onslaught as it smashed into the stone surroundings, causing parts to crumble to the ground, leaving gaping holes in the city's defences. Their respite came in the three hours it took to reload the cannon – they could use the time to repair the wall with mud and other materials to hand. The defenders draped animal skins over the walls, which, together with the mud, helped to cushion subsequent blows to that area.

The noise and incredible shaking of the walls as each ball smashed into them caused as much psychological damage as it did physical. The pounding went on for days. Constantine was helped by Giovanni Giustiniani and his army of 700 soldiers from the island of Chios. Giustiniani was instrumental in keeping the walls repaired and Constantinople somehow continued to hold strong. By now, the battle had raged for 12 days.

One of the major aims for Mehmed's army was to fill the moat surrounding the city walls so that access could be quickly gained but Constantine's men emptied them at night. Even so, there had been enough damage and headway for a second stab at taking over Constantinople on 18 April, but this was repelled.

One of the most effective pre-war plans enacted by the Ottomans was the building of a large castle on the European side of Constantinople, close to the city. Finished well in time for the siege,

Images: Alamy, REX

Ottoman's nicknamed it Bogaz Kesen, which translates as the 'throat cutter.' Taking just four months to complete, it could be used to control sea traffic on the Bosphorus strait. The Ottoman Turks could cut supplies to Constantinople by blasting away at defiant ships trying to sail past, using large cannons situated on the water's edge. Constantinople was dangerously isolated.

But just as the Ottoman Turks had made preparations, so too had Constantinople. The defenders had strung a chain across the mouth of the Golden Horn. By blocking access to the waterway, the defenders were able to prevent an onslaught from that direction. The defenders had proved adept at seeing off the Ottomans' naval advances and there had been close ship-to-ship combat during which the Byzantines emerged victorious. Yet cutting off the Golden Horn meant they could concentrate their efforts on defending the land-lying areas of the wall instead.

> For hundreds of years, the main threat to Constantinople came from Rome, the centre of the Catholic Church

The sultan's solution was ingenious. Mehmed decided the answer would be to haul the ships over land from the sea to the water cut off by the chain. Soldiers and oxen pulled at the ships, sending them over pre-laid rollers greased with animal fat. Scores of ships were hauled over in a mammoth overnight task. Surprised and aghast, the defenders were unsure what to do. The ships were now able to fire at the scantly guarded wall to the side of the Golden Horn. Within hours, great damage was being caused and Mehmed showed his ruthless side. When a group of defenders managed to escape from one sunken ship, Mehmed's punishment was to have them impaled.

The high-stakes game of cat and mouse continued and Mehmed ordered the Ottomans to mine under the city. On 16 May, Christian soldiers heard underground activity and went to investigate. Their discovery of miners put them on high alert and, having sorted the initial problem, they tried to think up effective ways to spot further attempts. John Grant, a Scotsman who had found himself in Constantinople, recommended placing buckets of water around the walls of the city. A ripple on the surface of the water would alert them to possible mining. It worked.

The attacks may have been repelled but the defenders were getting tired and their walls were a mess. On 27 May, Mehmed made the decision to throw everything at the city. Ottoman forces bombarded the walls relentlessly, causing heavy damage. They were fast and furious, giving the defenders little time to make repairs. Mehmed then prepared his men to march forward. They were, he said, not to touch the structure of the city – he wanted Constantinople to remain as intact as possible so that it could form his capital. They could loot and enslave, though. With this promise, the army spent 28 May getting ready, praying, resting and running through their tactics.

Constantine prepared his city, encouraged his soldiers to fight to the last man and vowed to defend his city to the death. There were just 4,000 men left to hold Constantinople – half that at the start of the siege. On 29 May, after a 47-day siege, the invaders surged forward, scaling the walls. They were pushed back by the defenders who knocked away ladders and used hot oil to scald the invaders. Two waves of attack were repelled.

But Mehmed's Janissaries – Christians picked up by the Ottomans as children and trained as fighters – broke through, their elite training enabling them to breech the walls after numerous hours of fighting. There were hand-to-hand battles in the narrow streets of the city. The defenders knew the city would soon be overpowered. Screams filled the night air. As Ottoman soldiers poured into Constantinople, the city was overwhelmed.

The Ottomans flung open the great bronze doors of Haghia Sophia and massacred large numbers of worshippers. With priests dying by the altar and with a vast number of prisoners being rounded up, the end was upon the city. Their emperor tore off his imperial ornaments so he looked like any normal soldier, saying, "The city is fallen and I am still alive", and charging to his death. The invaders tied up any enemy they didn't slaughter, grabbed women and fought over the most attractive of them. Children were led into slavery and the city was ransacked of what little it had left. After more than 1,000 years of a glorious Constantinople, the last outpost of the Roman Empire was no more.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

Although Christians aimed to reclaim Constantinople after its fall, such ambitions fizzled out in the 16th century. Many of Byzantine's learned men had left the empire and sought out new inspiration, flooding Europe with teachings and culture and Constantinople was transformed into an Islamic city. Constantinople – renamed Istanbul – became attractive to Muslims, Jews and Christians and they lived in harmony in a city that Mehmed II had rebuilt both structurally and culturally. With the Ottoman Empire in decline, the 20th century brought changes. The First World War meant Istanbul came to be occupied by Britain, France and Italy, leading to the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

Once the walls were breached, it was only a matter of time

Images: Alamy, REX

RULING THE WORLD:

THE LEGACY OF COLONIALISM

The Age of Discovery paved the way for European colonisation – and the world continues to deal with the fallout

Written by Mohammed Barber

Why are European languages the most widely spoken? Why is Christianity so prevalent? And why are so many borders simple straight lines?

The answer, in short, is empires. European imperialism created the modern world. As Europeans traversed the globe seeking trade with the 'Old World', they realised business could be conducted through cannon fire and muskets. It wasn't moral, but it was lucrative. Superior technology coupled with intra-European competition led to the birth of empires, which subjugated most of the world's population under a few Western European countries. Though the formal era of colonialism is over, the modern world is still scarred by it. Through the wars of recent decades, our towering skyscrapers and even the languages we speak, the remnants of colonialism can be seen everywhere. But how did a handful of Western European countries come to dominate the rest of the world?

Adventure and the search for riches – not conquest – initially motivated the first travellers on their voyages into the 'Old World'. But the relationship was always imbalanced, with Western Europe being the stronger military power, which became painfully apparent when the natives challenged the status quo. In Latin America, the Spanish and Portuguese found the raw materials they needed to power their ambitions in Europe. Eventually, it became simpler to replace the native powers with European vassals, leading to the colonisation of Central and South America.

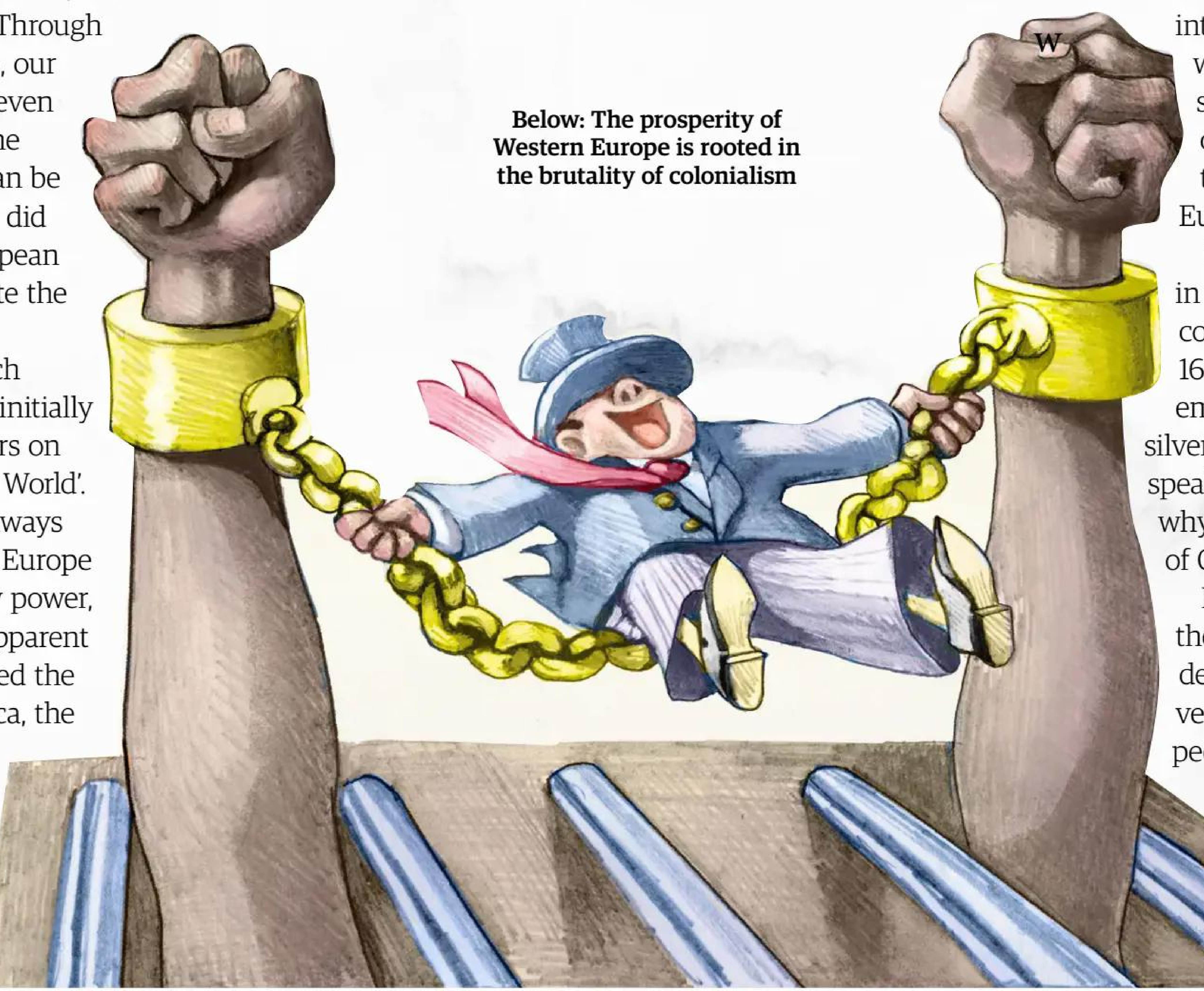
Likewise, when the British East India Company (EIC) first landed in India in 1608, it was to establish trading relations with the culturally developed power that accounted for 23% of the world's GDP. At the Battle of Plassey 1757, the EIC took direct control of Bengal after its Nawab refused to be the puppet ruler the Company desired. Over the next century, this private company (with much support from the British government) went from controlling a state to colonising the subcontinent. When the British left in 1947, India only accounted for 4% of the world's GDP.

China also endured an unpleasant experience with the British. With tea becoming ever more popular at home, the British proposed a trade – Indian opium for Chinese tea. Seeing the devastating impact of opium on its population, the Chinese refused. So, the British and its superior navy simply bombed Chinese ports into submission. Thus is the story of the Opium Wars.

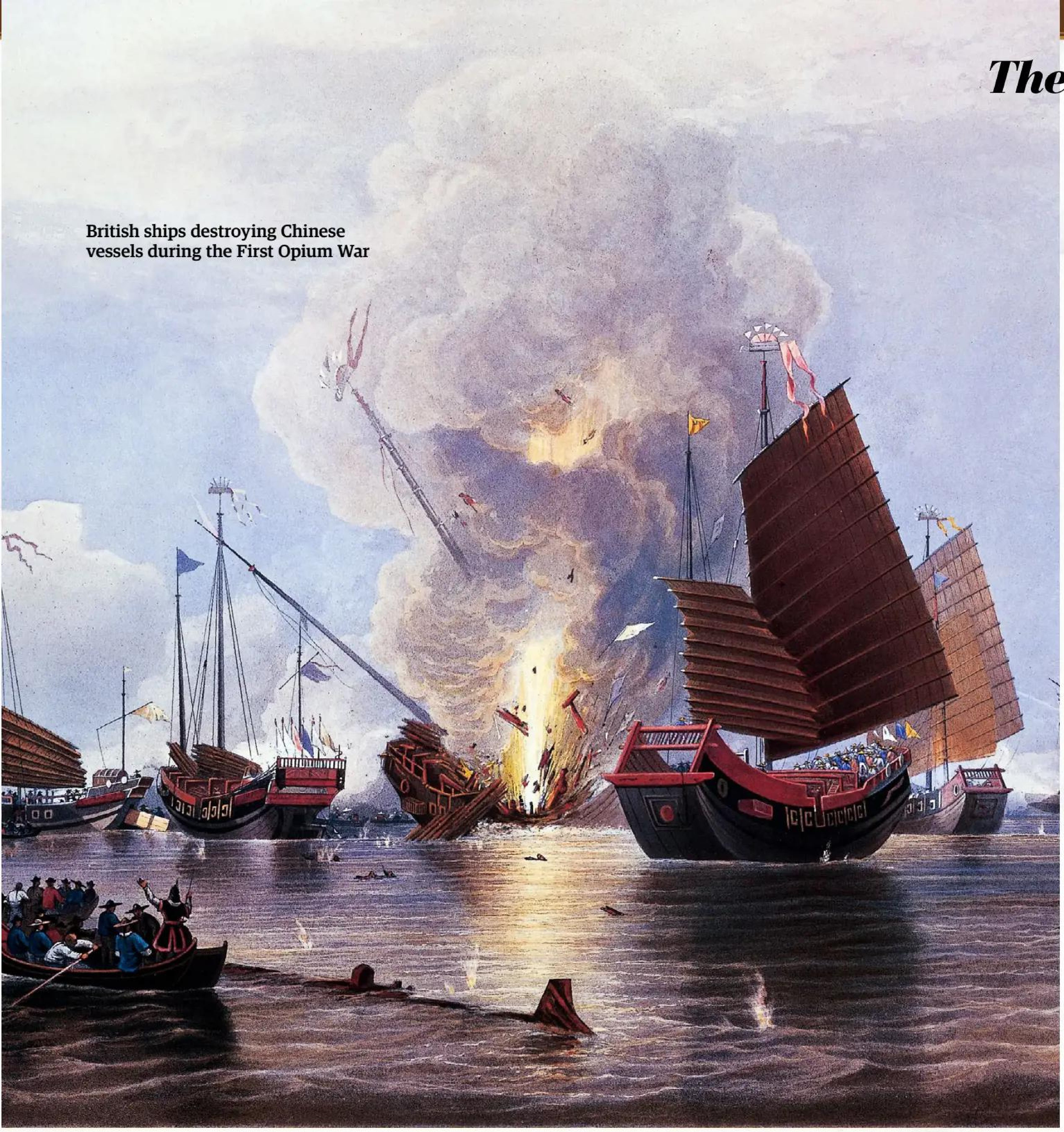
European powers were not coy in showing who the power really belonged to in order to "maintain" trading relations. The search for profit brought untold wealth to Western Europe, but also increased competition to sniff out opportunities before their European neighbours. As a result, Western powers soon found themselves administering large swathes of land without intending to. In other words, empire was not, in the beginning, a calculated strategy by Western powers to take over the world. It simply became so to have more power over their own European neighbours.

The story of European empire begins in the 15th century, when Portugal conquered Ceuta in North Africa. By 16th century, Spain and Portugal had empires in Latin America, mining gold, silver and tin. This is why Latin Americans speak the language of their ex-colonisers, why Americans speak English, and parts of Canada speak French.

Meanwhile, European powers had their eye on Africa, but disease and well-developed city states made colonising it very difficult. So they traded in people instead. The Transatlantic Slave Trade lasted over 300 years,



Below: The prosperity of Western Europe is rooted in the brutality of colonialism

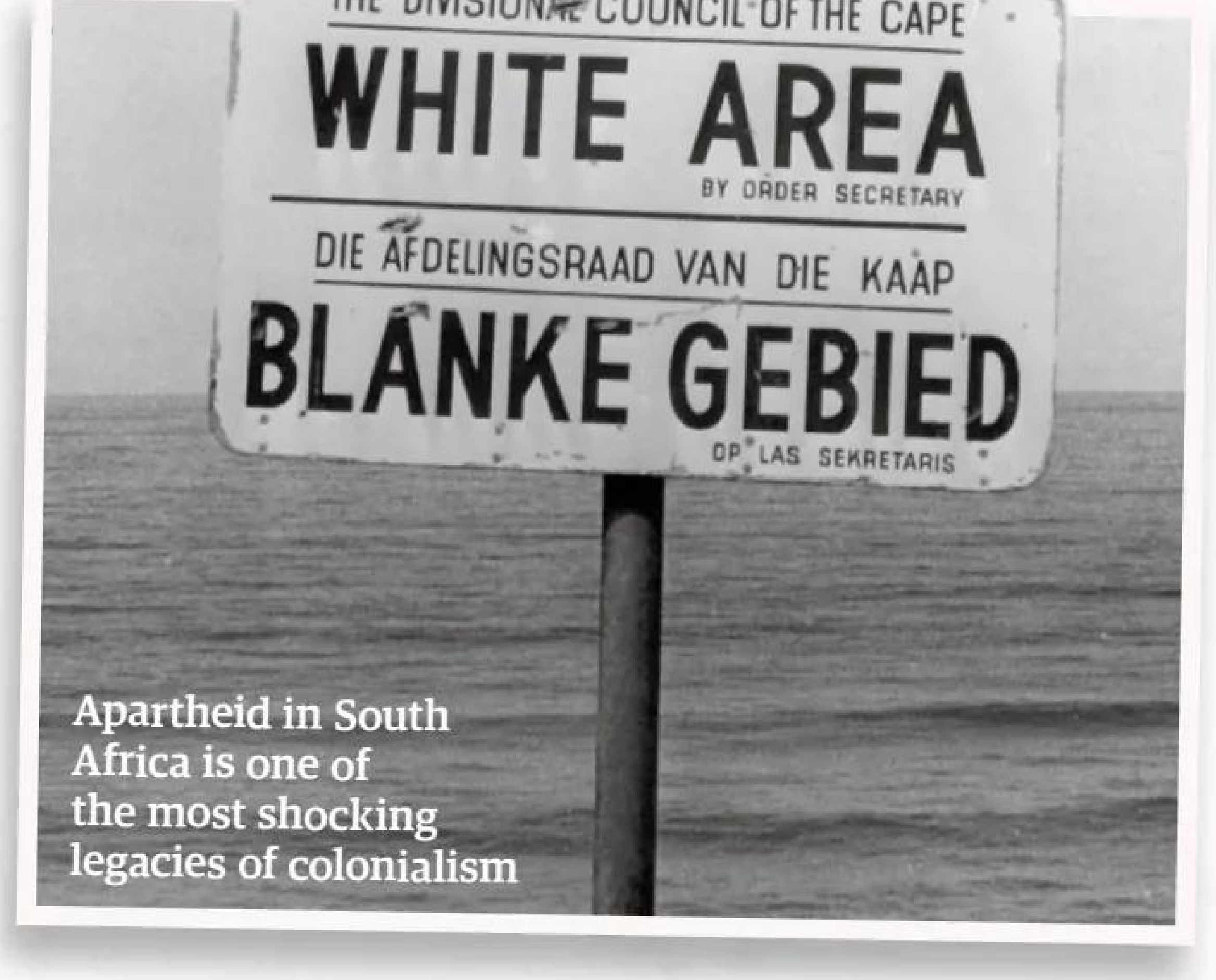


British ships destroying Chinese vessels during the First Opium War

> *"To this day, many African-Americans have no idea which part of Africa their heritage stems from"*

shipping human beings mostly to Brazil and the Caribbean to unpaid, involuntary work on sugar, tobacco and coffee plantations. Slave labour is why these products, once the reserve of the rich, became affordable for Europe's rising middle classes. Many African-Americans have no idea which part of Africa their heritage stems from, because their ancestors were abducted, shipped and sold. The legacy of the slave trade can be seen in bricks and mortar, too – the US Capitol, White House, Washington Monument, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello and universities such as the University of North Carolina on Chapel Hill were built by slaves.

Perhaps the most harmful legacy of colonialism, one that underpinned the Transatlantic Slave Trade and still affects people today, is racism. Racism operated on many levels, but core to it are the twin notions of European superiority and white supremacy. These beliefs made the colonising of nations and trading of its people ideologically palatable. No good Christian could countenance the brutality of empire, so it needed a justification. Centuries of travelogues, poetry, fiction and academic works had typified non-Western places as intellectually deprived, technologically undeveloped and morally backward. This characterisation was necessary so the West could position itself as superior. Colonisation was justified as a means to an end to civilise the barbarians, to save them from


THE DIVISIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CAPE
WHITE AREA
BY ORDER SECRETARY
DIE AFDELINGSRAAD VAN DIE KAAP
BLANKE GEBIED
OP LAS SEKRETARIS

Apartheid in South Africa is one of the most shocking legacies of colonialism

ORIENTALISM

How the West created the East in its image

Orientalism used to refer to the study of Middle Eastern and Asian languages, cultures and history during the Age of Discovery. But the literary critic, Edward Said, argued in his ground-breaking book Orientalism (1978) that Orientalism was not just an academic pursuit, but a process that created 'the Orient' (i.e. anywhere outside of Western Europe) in the Western imagination. Everyone from novelists, poets, philosophers, political theorists, economists, travel writers, imperial administrators and academics delineated the East as inherently and intrinsically different to the West, so when one thought about the 'Orient', it evoked a certain set of thoughts and images. Many thought of brutal sultans exacting power over submissive and sensual harems. Others thought of poor snake charmers in dust-blown villages, sat on colourful, bedraggled rugs. Some simply thought of elephants and camels. Either way, it was nothing like the 'civilised' West.

Said critiqued how knowledge about the East was produced by the West in the post-Enlightenment period. This process was crucial, as the West defined itself to be everything the East was not. Consequently, it is within this process of Orientalism that ideas of European superiority, white supremacy and racism were incubated – the pretexts for colonialism. Said's ideas were hotly debated when the book was published and continue to fire debate today. Nevertheless, Orientalism led to the birth of postcolonial studies in history, politics, anthropology and even music.

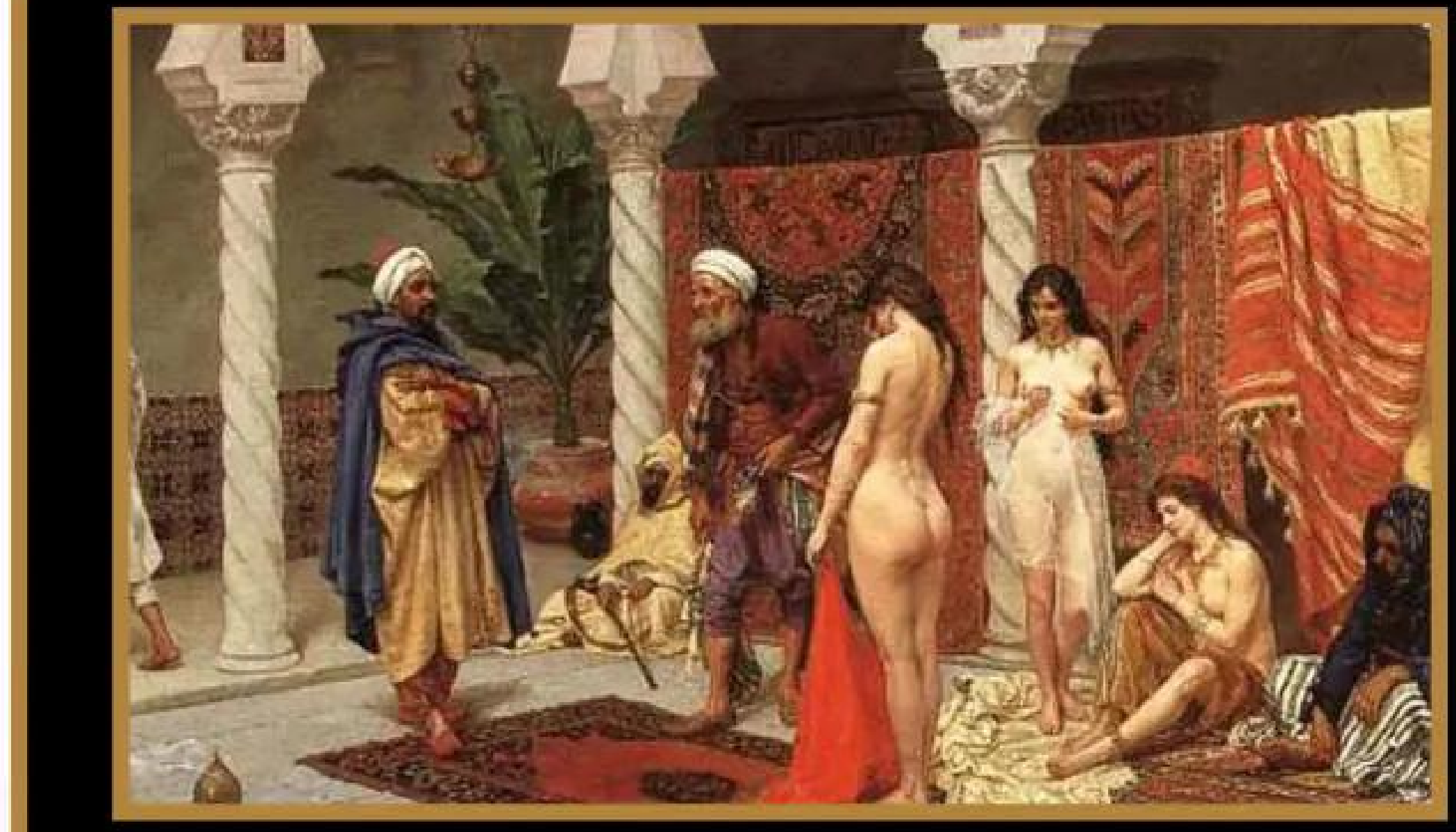


Image source: Francis Tsang/Cover/Getty Images

Paintings such as Giulio Rosati's Inspecting New Arrivals proliferated Western ideas about the depravity of the East. Rosati never visited the Middle East

Palestinian American academic and literary critic Edward Said (1935-2003) critiqued how knowledge about the East was – and is – produced by the West

Images: Getty Images; Alamy

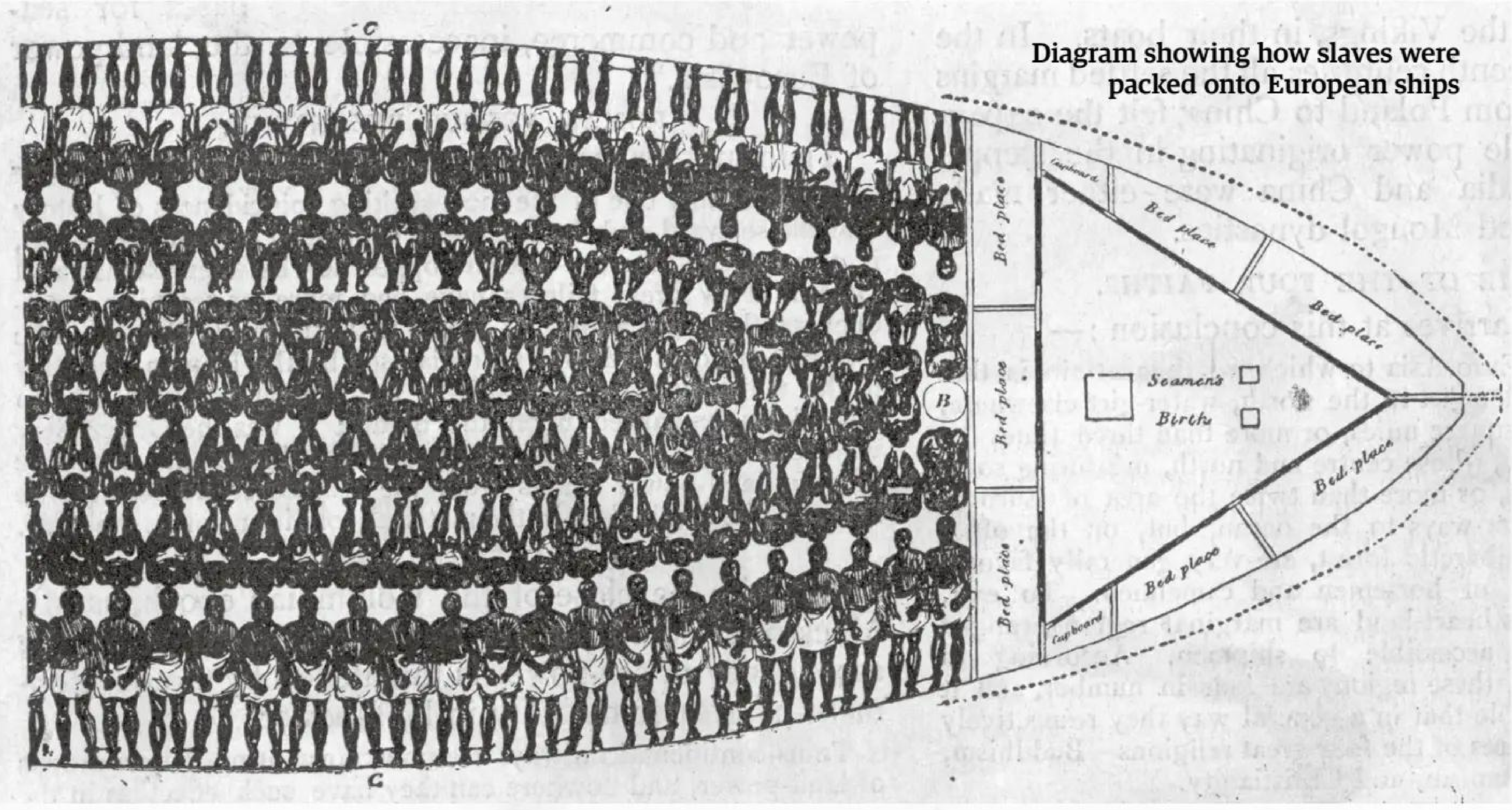


Diagram showing how slaves were packed onto European ships

> *"Colonisation was justified as a means to an end to help civilise the barbarians"*

their own selves, in what Rudyard Kipling called "the white man's burden". As a result, thousands of missionaries went across the world preaching the word of Christ, banishing local customs and installing European modes of morality (and bureaucracy). Modern borders are another legacy of colonialism that generate conflict across the world. Present-day Nigeria is a colonial creation – the name was coined in a London Times article in 1897, and its borders contain hundreds of tribes, who are also found in other nations. It was created as a matter of colonial policy with no unifying language or culture – the national language is English.

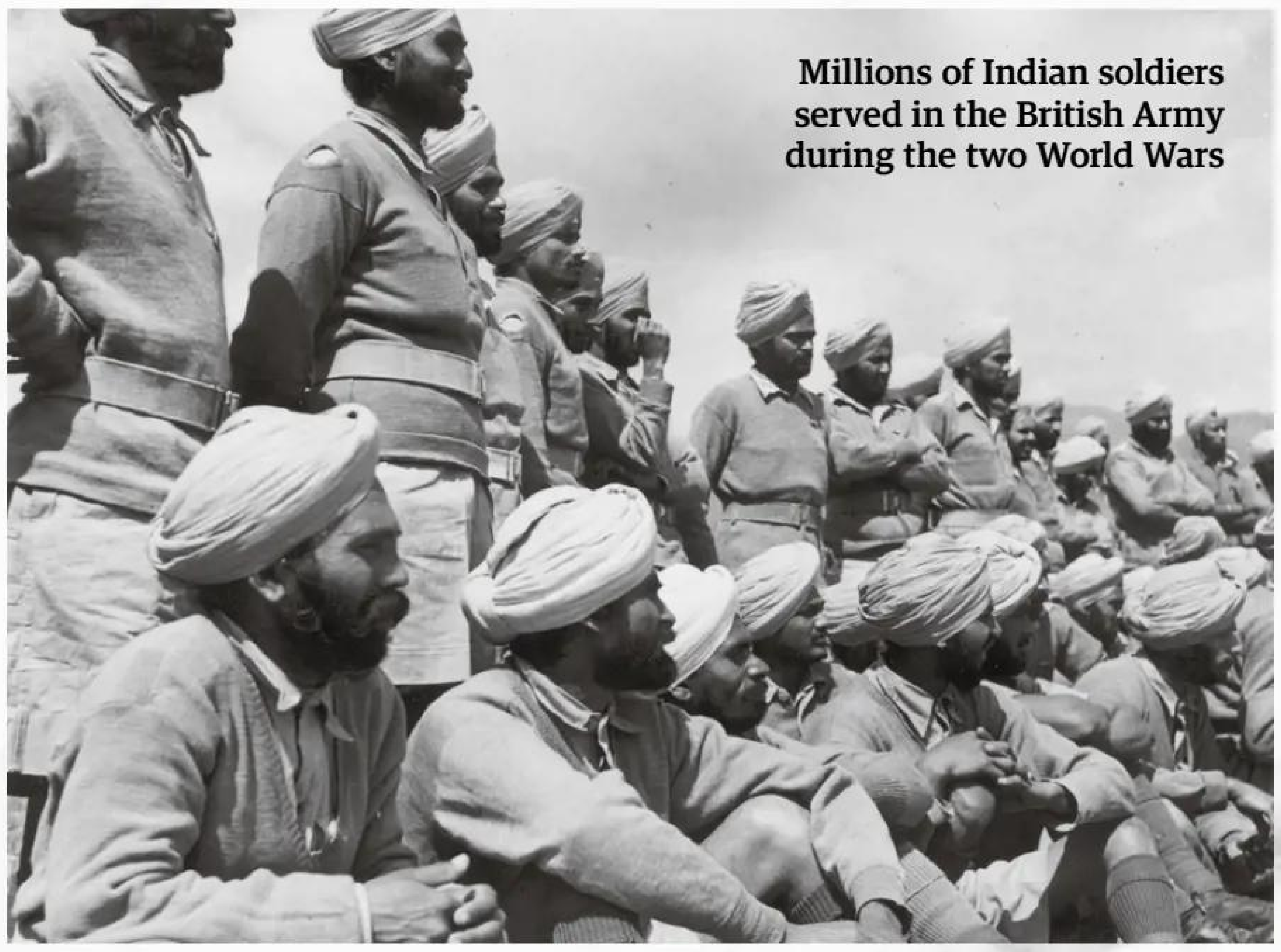
After the First World War, the French and British carved the former Ottoman Empire between themselves by drawing perfectly straight lines on a map, splitting ethnic communities into different countries across the Middle East. Palestine was partitioned, leading to an conflict that still rages on. The British partitioned the Indian subcontinent in 1947, turning 15 million people into refugees, and killing between one and two million people in the ensuing conflict. Shockingly, the Partition of India was conducted in five weeks by a lawyer who'd never before set foot on the subcontinent. Then, in 1971, East Pakistan declared independence and became Bangladesh. Meanwhile, the dispute over Kashmir has seen India and Pakistan fight three major wars. Though it is simplistic to suggest colonially instituted borders are the sole cause, they're central to these conflicts.

Western museums and treasuries are filled with riches plundered from colonies. The colonial taking that generates the most amount of heat is the

QWHITE RIGHT

The racism of empire is still alive. Today it operates far more surreptitiously, making it harder to spot, for example in modern beauty standards. Throughout the days of empire, being beautiful meant being white. The notion of whiteness extended not just to skin colour, but also thin lips, small features, blond hair and blue eyes. Though the Nazis took these standards to extreme levels, these were still commonly held beliefs across Europe. Even today, millions of people in Africa, Asia and the Middle East bleach their skin to look more attractive. The global skin-bleaching trade is a multi-billion dollar industry, and projected to be worth $24 billion by 2027, the lion's share of sales in the Asia Pacific region. An estimated 40% of Chinese women have used skin-bleaching products, as have 60% of Indian women and a staggering 77% of Nigerian women. Beauty pageants around the world are overwhelmingly won by light-skinned women, from Brazil to China, who often possess dainty and pointed facial features. The last few decades have seen the rates of rhinoplasty (nose jobs) skyrocket across the Middle East, by both men and women who want a 'European-looking' nose. The assumed primacy of European beauty that has taken hold of the world is a concept rooted in white supremacy.

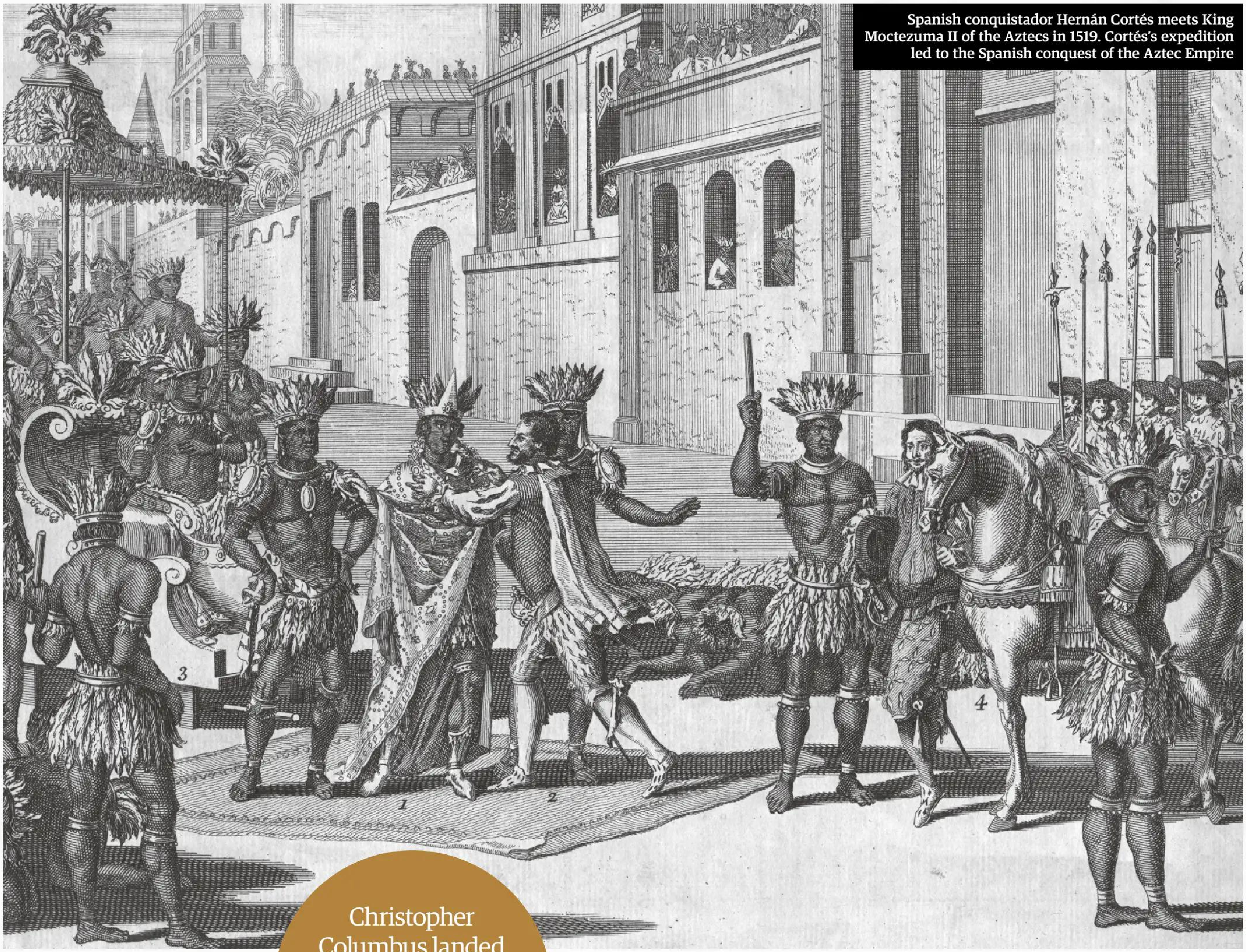
Skin-bleaching products can contain dangerous levels of hydroquinone and mercury



Millions of Indian soldiers served in the British Army during the two World Wars

Trains from India were specifically targeted to kill refugees going to the new country of Pakistan

Image source: Keystone Features/Getty Images



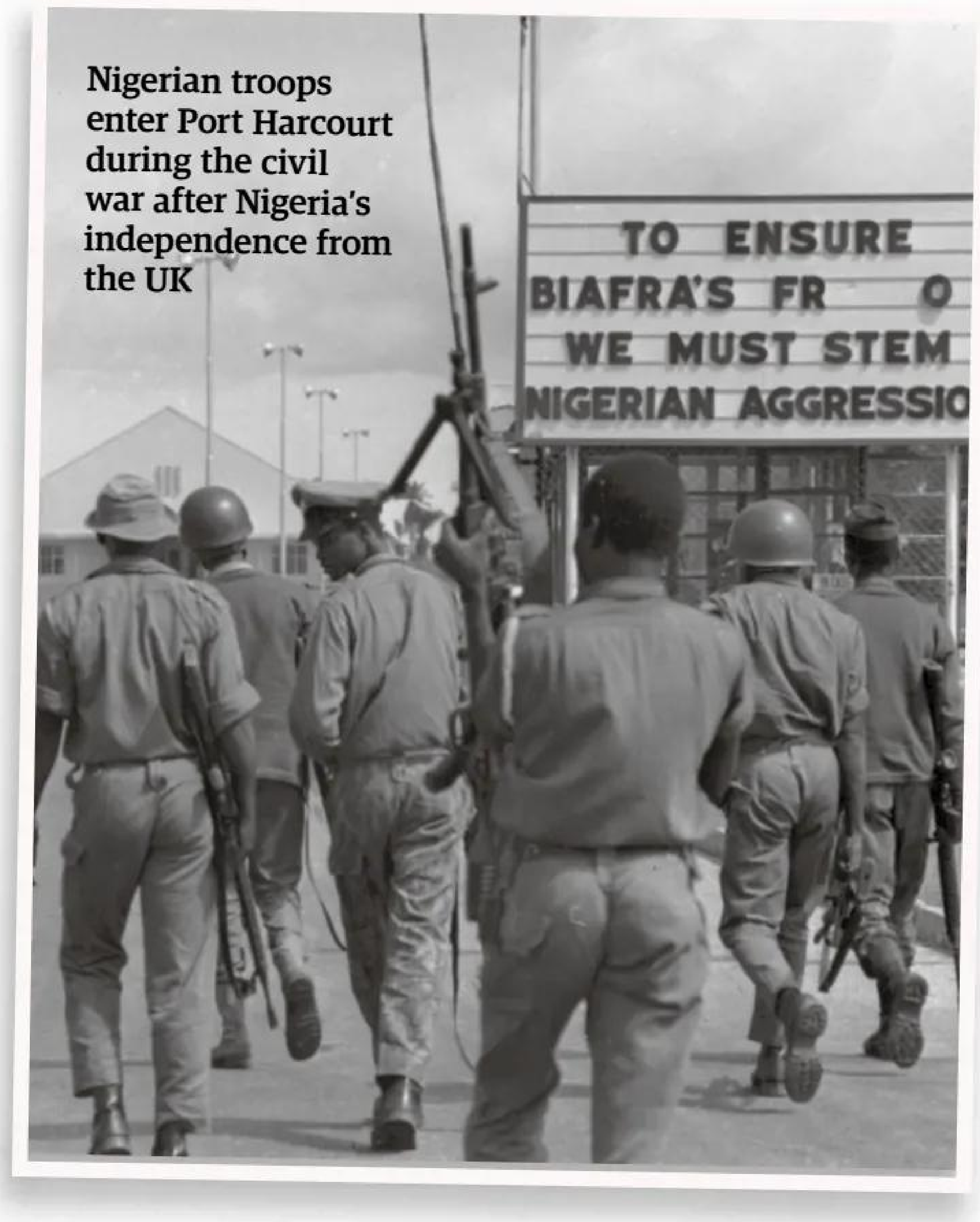
Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés meets King Moctezuma II of the Aztecs in 1519. Cortés's expedition led to the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire

Christopher Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492 and started the Spanish Empire

famous Kohinoor diamond, which once adorned the legendary Peacock Throne of the Mughals in India. Prince Albert had it recut in 1852, drastically reducing its size, and it now resides in the Tower Of London, thousands of miles from its original home.

The exploitation of colonial assets was not limited to rare treasures. When the two World Wars broke out, Britain mobilised its resources across the empire – material and human. Across both wars, millions of Indian soldiers fought on the front lines. It's telling that there are apparently more memorials to animals that died in the war, than to the non-Western soldiers who laid down their lives for the British Empire. English is a national language in India, which most Indians can speak to some level. However, studies have shown that Indians who are fluent in English earn 34% more than their peers who are not. Fluency in English is frequently a marker of education and social status.

Western Europe became prosperous because it drained prosperity from the rest of the world. Whereas China, Brazil and India are now catching up to their European colonisers, places like Sub-Saharan Africa are still woefully behind. All these countries are having to deal with the aftermath of colonialism, issues that are complex and deep-rooted. The world map could look very different, had countries not been colonised and left to deal with the consequences. Colonialism is the reason why many Moroccans speak French, and why English is the national language of Nigeria. It's also why goods such as fruit and sugar are so cheaply produced, why millions see white skin as beautiful and why European museums are filled with rare artefacts from around the world. The list goes on. Though the formal days of empire are gone, its legacy lives on in various guises, blatant or discreet. The embers of empire continue to burn.



Nigerian troops enter Port Harcourt during the civil war after Nigeria's independence from the UK

Images: Getty Images; Alamy

c.1517-1648

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation successfully challenged the might of Rome

Written by Catherine Curzon

In 16th-century Europe, the world was changing. The Roman Catholic Church held an immense amount of political power and spiritual influence, but this power and influence was not without its detractors. With the Protestant Reformation, it faced its greatest challenge; the world would never be the same again. In the early 1500s, the power of the pope and the church over which he presided had become a source of annoyance for some rulers, who were looking to increase their own authority in relation to Rome. Their dissatisfaction and that of many of the Catholic congregation was only exacerbated by the opulence in which members of the clergy lived, with corruption widespread and barely hidden. Some Catholics wondered if their pope could really dedicate the time he should to their spiritual wellbeing too, since he seemed so occupied with politics, networking and sometimes even war. It was a spiritual powder keg, just waiting for someone to light the fuse. The Protestant Reformation did just that, resulting in the establishment of the Protestant faith and a schism in Western Christianity.

The Protestant Reformation began on 31 October 1517 in Wittenberg, Germany. when monk and academic, Martin Luther, nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of All Saints' Church. The theses attacked the corruption of the Catholic Church, chiefly the practice of selling "indulgences" to absolve sin. Despite what the Vatican might claim, wrote Luther, man could not buy his way into heaven; the only way to salvation was through belief in God, and the only religious authority was the Bible itself, not the pope in Rome.

Luther's protests again Catholic corruption was enormously controversial, but his was not a lone voice. Two years later, Ulrich Zwingli popularised the Reformation in Switzerland with sermons that echoed Luther's teachings. In 1541, exiled French Protestant John Calvin settled in Geneva with his followers, who followed his doctrine that stressed the power of God and the predetermined fate of humanity. Dutch Calvinism would spread throughout Scotland and Europe, where it enjoyed influence for centuries.

Though the Vatican condemned Luther's teachings, Pope Leo X did not immediately excommunicate him. However, as Luther's writings began to spread across Europe, other Protestant thinkers added to the growing pile of Reformation literature. Luther's books were burned on the orders of Vatican officials and, in 1521, he was summoned before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms – a parliamentary meeting held in the city of Worms. Here, Luther was ordered to recant his philosophy; when he refused to do so, he was excommunicated.

However, excommunication could not stop the Protestant Reformation and the proliferation of

I.N.R.I.
Reutlingen

printing presses in Germany meant that Luther's words and those of his supporters could not be silenced. Luther recognised the importance of brevity and published short, pointed works that became hugely popular. Thanks to the woodcuts of Lucas Cranach the Elder that illustrated his pamphlets, Luther's message could also reach the illiterate. They were small, light and easy to carry, so travellers such as merchants carried them from place to place, distributing them in each new location. Within two months of their initial publication, Luther's Theses were being read all over Europe.

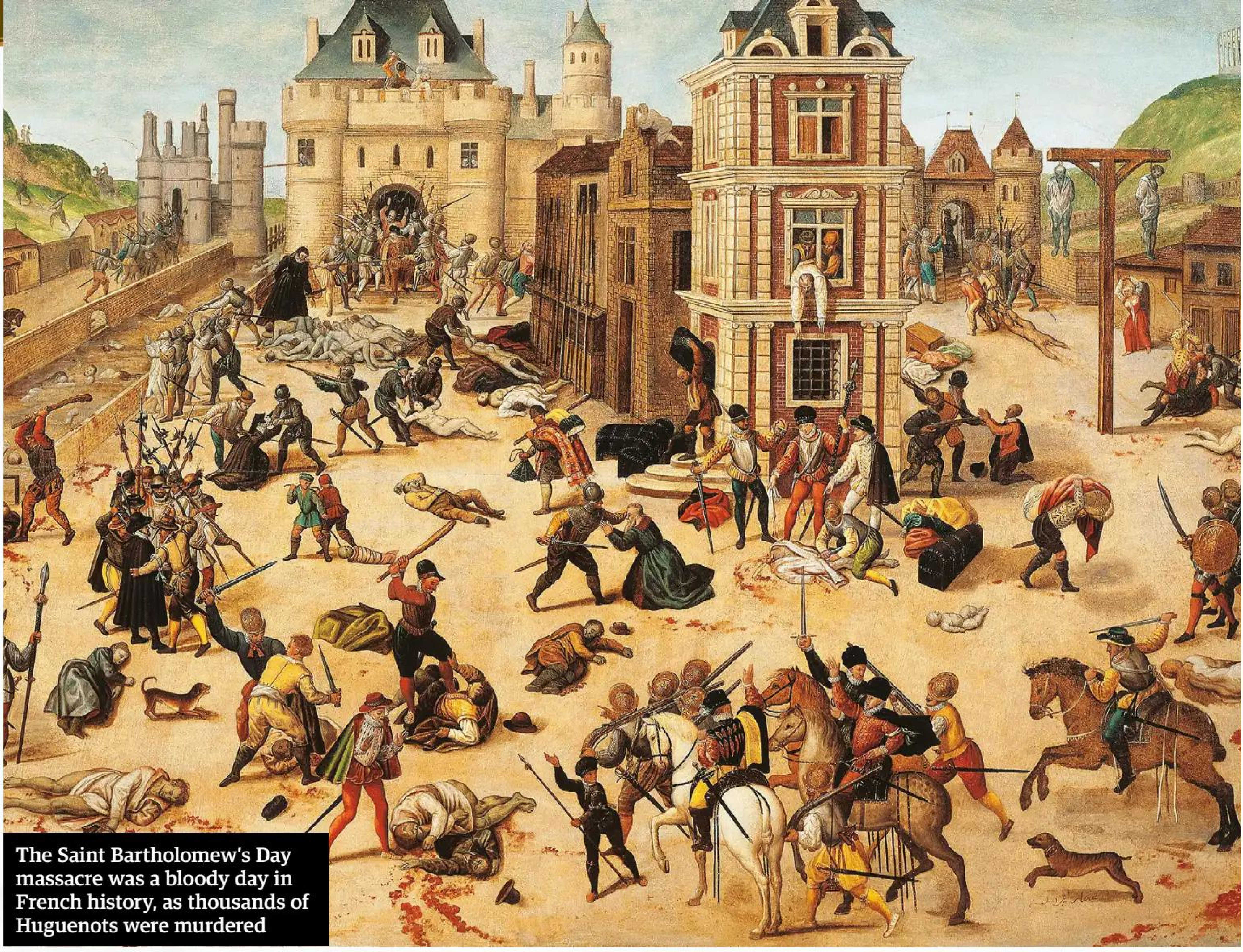
It was impossible for authorities to police every printing press, or every traveller who might be carrying pamphlets, but nor could they silence the evangelical preachers who shared Luther's messages. Figures such as Basel's Konrad Kürsner and Strasbourg's Matthäus Zell ensured that Protestantism was carried beyond Germany, emphasising that the corruptions and indulgences of the Catholic Church were not to be found in the bible. In some cities, violent anti-Catholic protests broke out, as dissatisfaction with the once all-powerful church spread.

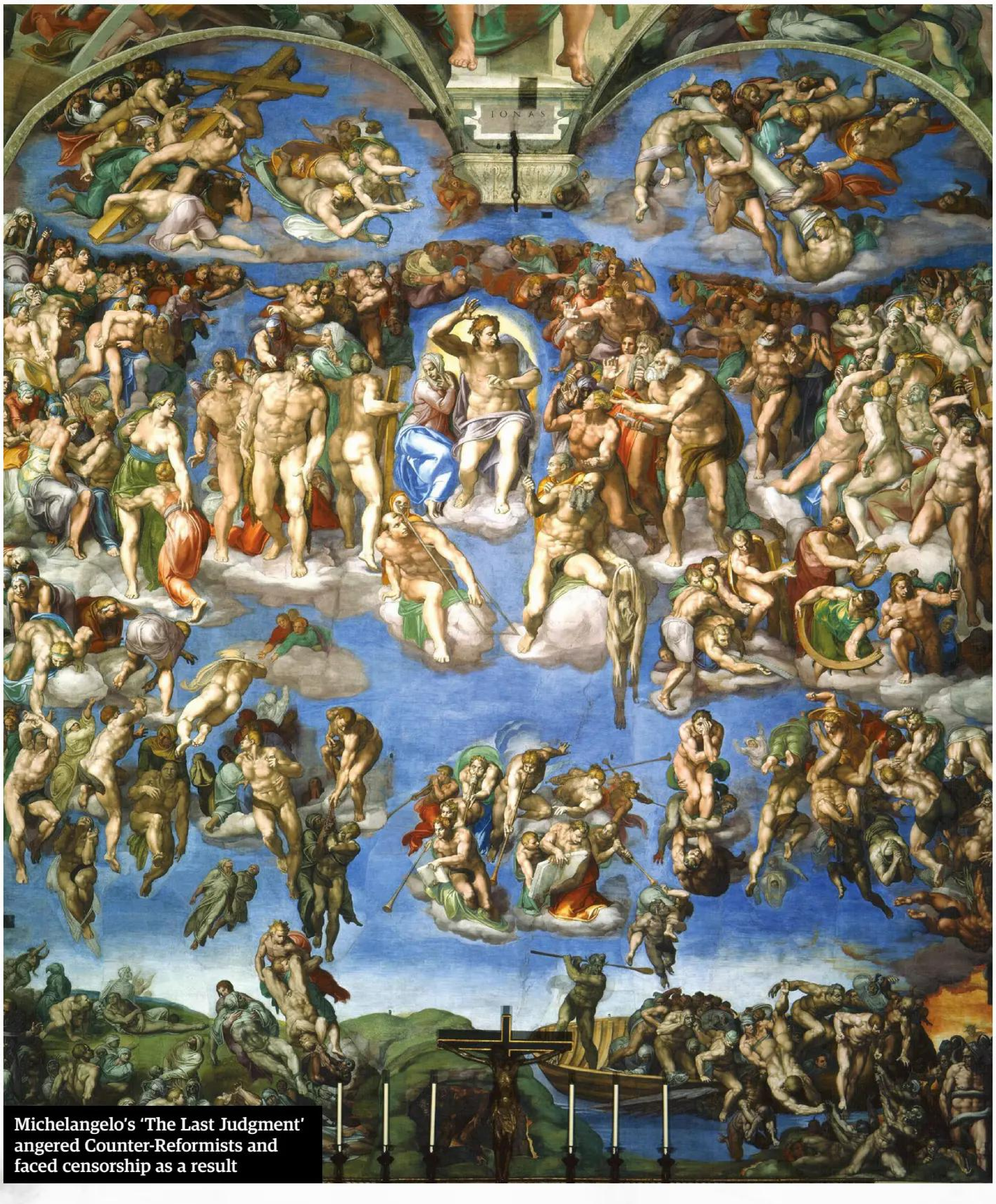
The reforms that Protestantism called for could not be achieved within the existing structure of Catholicism and, as the Reformation began to take hold, monasteries and convents were dissolved, powerful Catholic officials were expelled from positions of civic influence and the very face of Europe began to change. The property of dissolved Catholic institutions was repurposed to provide poor relief while, in keeping with Luther's belief that education was key to being able to serve God, libraries and schools were opened, financed by this repurposed wealth.

The Reformation brought with it violence and, inevitably, war. The efforts of the Counter-Reformation to fight back against the changes exploded into the wars of religion, as powers allied to Rome and those who wished to take advantage of the Vatican's tottering power fought for the upper hand. Though religion might have been the foundation of these wars, territory, wealth and dynasty came into play and with conflicts such as the Thirty Years' War, the religious and territorial boundaries of Europe were changed once more.

In France, meanwhile, the French Wars of Religion between the Catholics and Protestant Huguenots raged between 1562 and 1598. In this series of eight civil wars, millions of people died, including the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre of 1572, which saw thousands of Huguenots killed as a wave of mob violence swept through France. As a result of the conflicts the French monarchy found its power badly destabilised, as the predominantly Catholic France found itself split from within.

When King Henry VIII read Luther's writings, he was so furious that he penned a defence of Catholicism, which Pope Leo X rewarded with the title of Fidel Defensor (Defender of the Faith).


The Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre was a bloody day in French history, as thousands of Huguenots were murdered


Michelangelo's 'The Last Judgment' angered Counter-Reformists and faced censorship as a result

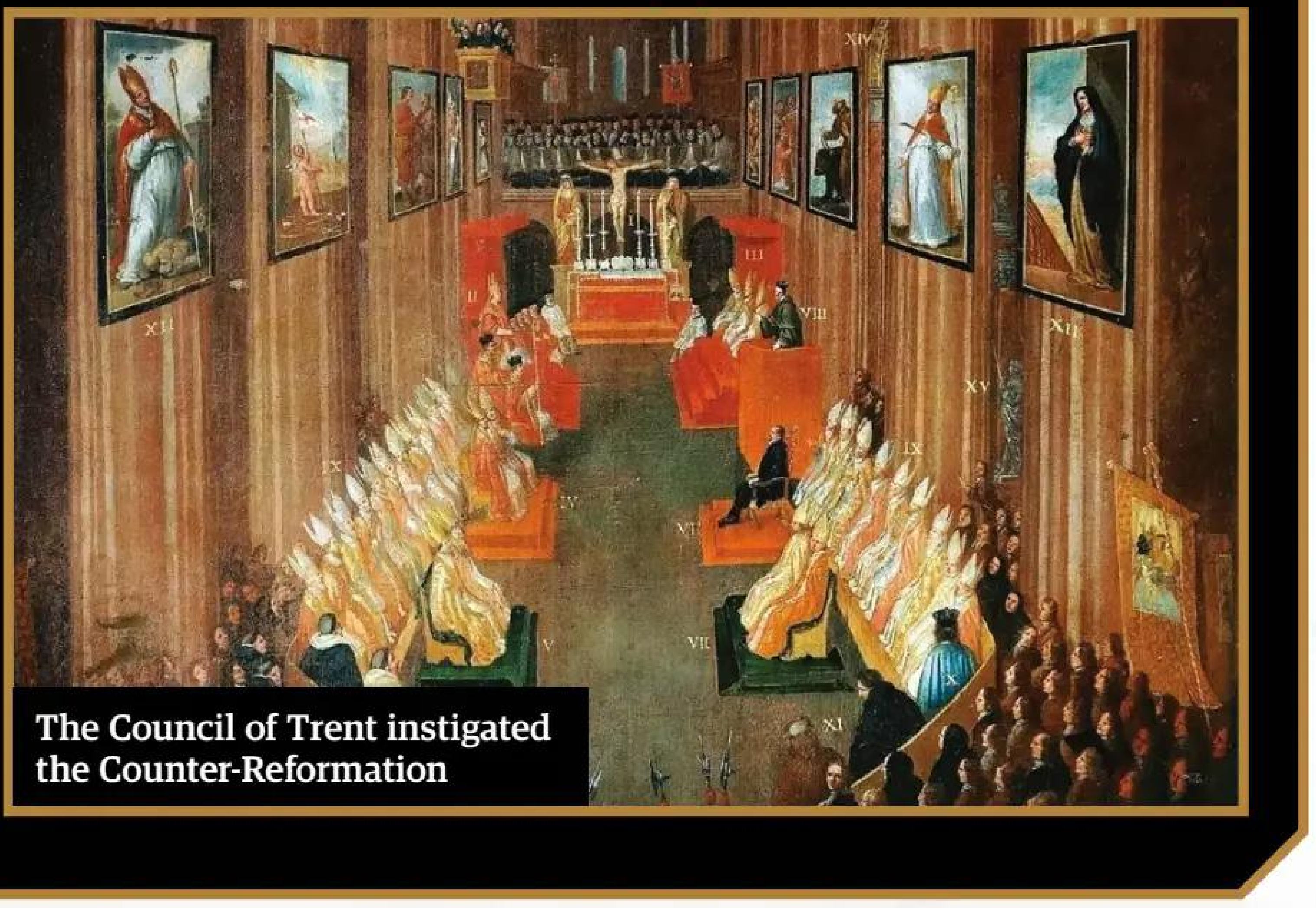
THE COUNTER-REFORMATION

When the Reformation came, it was met with a fierce opposition

In 1545, the Catholic Church held the Council of Trent, the first of a series of meetings that would discuss the issues raised by Martin Luther. This marked the beginning of the Counter-Reformation, as the church sought to reform internally and re-establish itself as Europe's spiritual authority. Under the stewardship of Pope Paul II, the Council made significant changes, addressing allegations of corruption and other malpractice, while rejecting any compromise with Protestantism. The Counter-Reformation attempted to re-establish the concept of one ultimate spiritual truth, arguing that the Bible might be misinterpreted without a central authority such as the Roman Catholic Church to offer guidance. The church also recognised the importance of art when it came to spreading its message and today, many works exist that are lasting monuments to the Council's discussions.

Michelangelo's 'The Last Judgment', which can be seen in the Sistine Chapel, however, angered the Counter-Reformers by daring to show nudity, in direct contravention of the Council's ruling that no such imagery may be displayed in a place of worship. The work was censored for centuries.

The efforts of the Catholic Church to re-establish its authority proved successful in some countries, though not all. In a changing world, there was simply no going back.



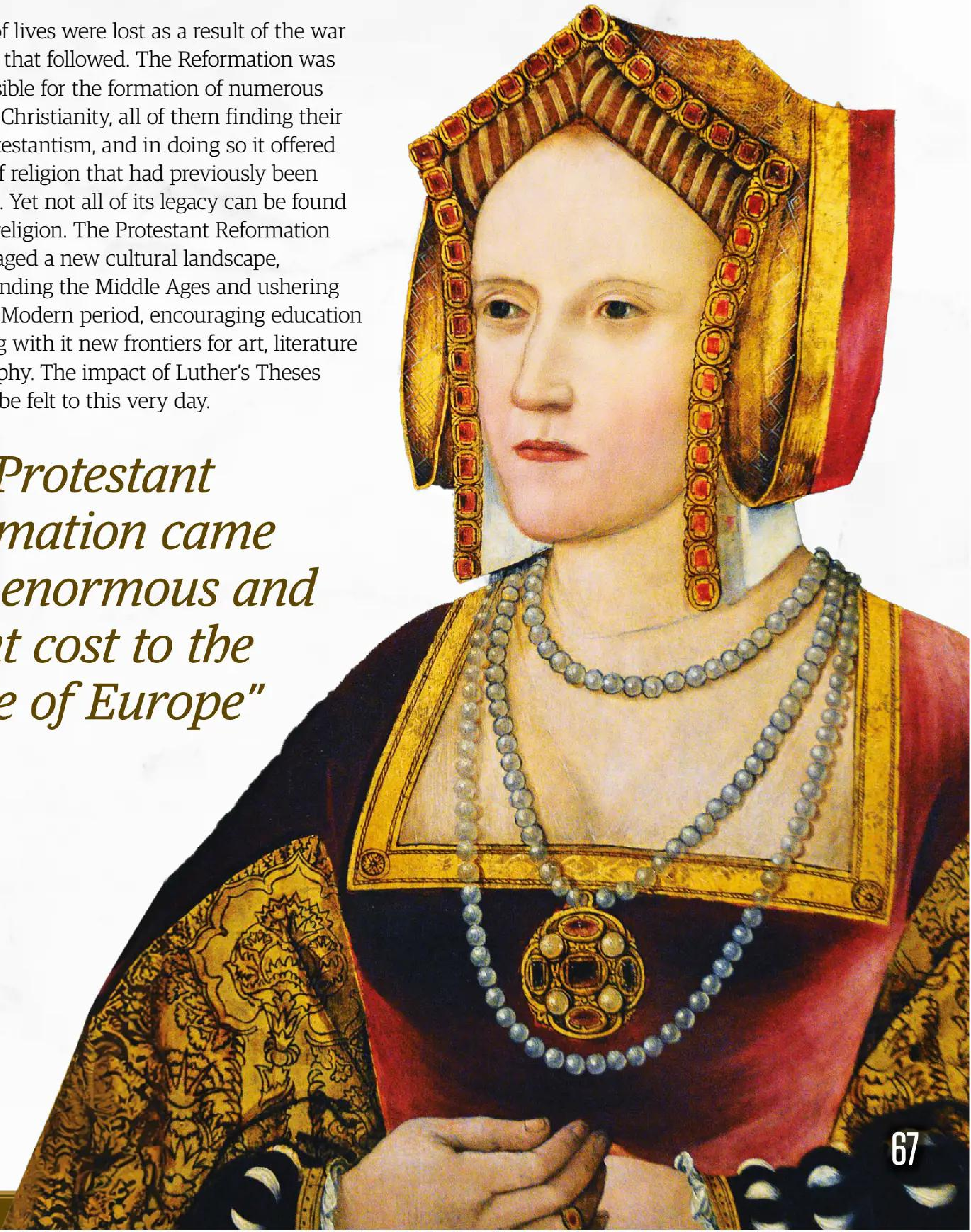
The Council of Trent instigated the Counter-Reformation

Henry's Catholic faith, however, was not as strong as his wish for a male heir and when a son wasn't forthcoming from his marriage to 40-year-old Catherine of Aragon, he sought an annulment. In 1527, Pope Clement VII refused the request, mindful that Rome was in the hands of Catherine's nephew, Charles V. With the official request denied, Henry decided to smash the Roman Catholic Church's authority in England. He changed the status quo to ensure that canon laws could only be passed with royal assent, and removed the right to appeal legal cases outside England, thus ensuring that the Vatican could have no influence over legal issues. Then in November 1534, he passed the Act of Supremacy.

This Act formally abolished papal authority in England and named Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church of England. For the existing clergy, there were two options: accept the new normal, or face the consequences. In the wake of the Act, the King ordered the dissolution of the monasteries and the closure of institutions, and buildings that embodied Catholic authority were also closed. Protestant reformers smashed statues, defaced artworks and in some cases, Catholic clergy were executed. Perhaps surprisingly, Henry was still a loyal follower of Catholic doctrine despite his aggressive split from the church. The burning of heretics continued and despite having named Protestant Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry's first announcements as head of the Church of England maintained traditional Catholic practices and doctrines, adding just a garnish of Lutheranism.

The Protestant Reformation came at enormous cost to the people of Europe. Though it reshaped the religious identity of the continent and ended the unchallenged influence of the Vatican forever, thousands of lives were lost as a result of the war and conflict that followed. The Reformation was also responsible for the formation of numerous branches of Christianity, all of them finding their roots in Protestantism, and in doing so it offered a freedom of religion that had previously been unthinkable. Yet not all of its legacy can be found in war and religion. The Protestant Reformation also encouraged a new cultural landscape, effectively ending the Middle Ages and ushering in the Early Modern period, encouraging education and bringing with it new frontiers for art, literature and philosophy. The impact of Luther's Theses continue to be felt to this very day.

> *"The Protestant Reformation came at an enormous and violent cost to the people of Europe"*



1618-1648

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR

The death throes of the Holy Roman Emperor's authority initiated the ultimate battle for religious freedom, ensnaring Europe and costing millions of lives

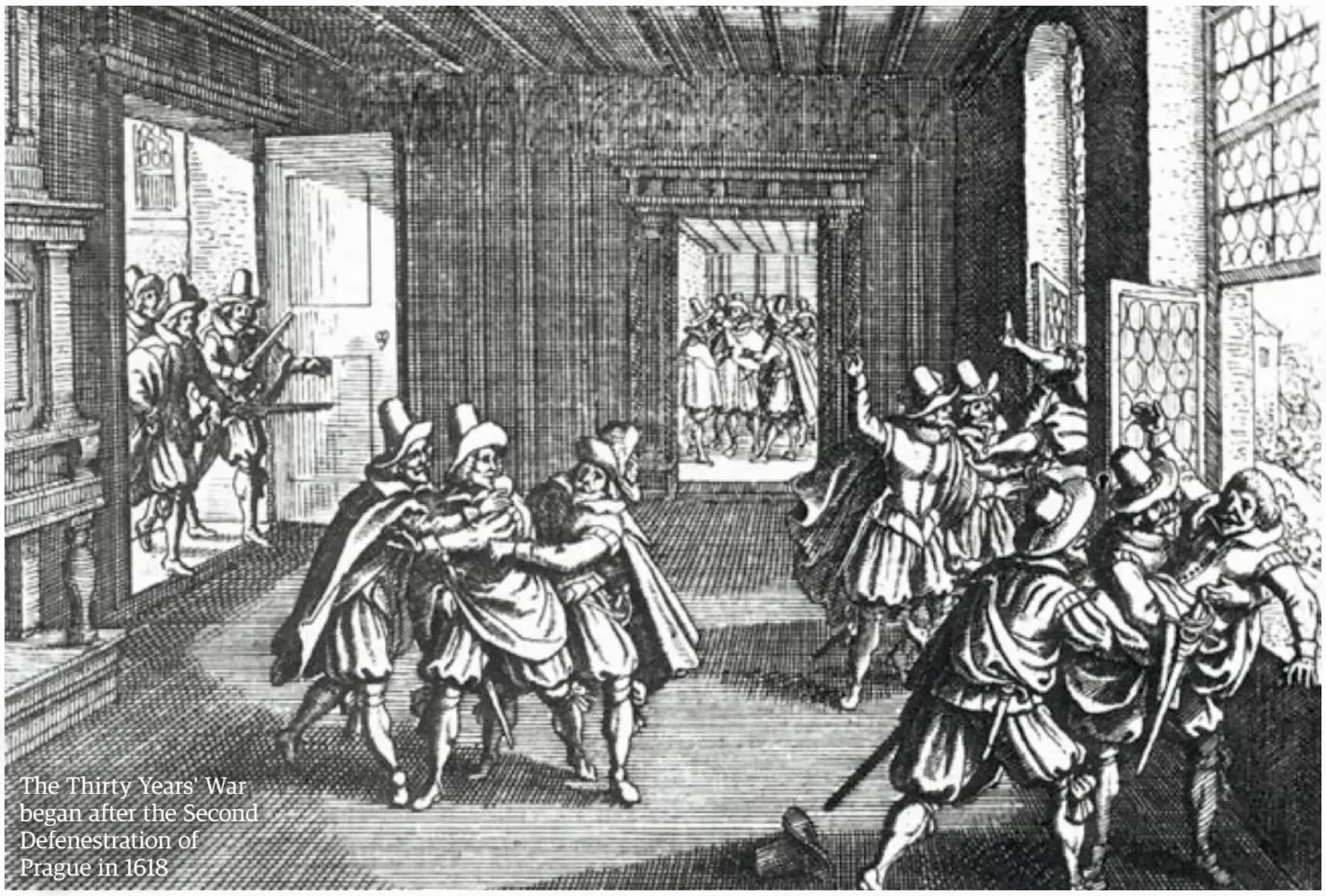
Written by James Horton

At the beginning of the 17th century Europe was poised for war. The Kingdom of Spain was intent on conquering the northern Netherlands, and France was determined to stop it. Both Spain and the Holy Roman Empire - which primarily covered modern-day Germany - were being ruled by members of the formidable House of Habsburg. The Kingdom of France was ruled by a rival dynasty and found itself sandwiched between Habsburg Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. France watched Spwain's army with a suspicious eye, resolving to stop it from advancing on the Netherlands and gaining yet more territory near France's own border.

As well as the territorial struggles between kingdoms, religiosity added another layer of friction to the situation in Europe. Since the Reformation in 1517, Protestantism and its two major sub-religions, Lutheranism and Calvinism, had spread throughout the continent. The surge of Protestants had fractured relationships both between countries and within their own borders. Italy, Spain, France, Poland, Hungary and others maintained traditional Catholicism as their state religion. Meanwhile, England, Denmark, Sweden and the northern Netherlands had converted to Protestantism. Yet within national borders the semi-independent regions practised conflicting Christian religions to that of the state.

Nowhere was this so hotly contested than in the Holy Roman Empire. The six German princes who served and elected the emperor (alongside the Elector of Bohemia) were evenly divided between Catholicism and Protestantism. In fact, the divisions had grown so deep that the princes had split into opposing forces named the Protestant Union and the Catholic League. The reigning Emperor Matthias and his chosen successor, Archduke Ferdinand II, did not appreciate the growing threat of the Protestants and plotted to oppress their religious freedoms. So while Europe was watching France, Spain and the Netherlands nervously, expectant of an impending war, they were caught by surprise when conflict broke out not to the west but in Prague, the violence sparked by an angry mob hurling some imperial advisors out of a window in an event that became known as the Defenestration of Prague.

As Matthias' successor, Ferdinand was set to inherit the Kingdom of Bohemia, which sat roughly on the modern Czech Republic-Slovakia border. Aware of Ferdinand's radical Catholic policies, the population - which included a mixture of Catholics and Protestants - sought assurances in 1618 that they should be granted the right to continue



The Thirty Years' War began after the Second Defenestration of Prague in 1618

> *"The Spanish wasted little time in establishing their foothold in Frederick's Palatinate region"*

practising whichever religion they saw fit. Their impending new king and emperor-elect agreed to sign the Letter of Majesty confirming this right, which it was hoped would assuage the masses and prevent rioting.

The imperial governors soon proved themselves disingenuous, however, at first preventing Bohemian villagers from erecting Protestant churches and then imprisoning them for attempting to do so. The populace was quickly united in its dismay and resolved to cast off the yolk of the House of Habsburg.

The angry citizenry fell on the capital of Prague, and an overly eager contingent decided that murdering Matthias' agents was the best way to send their message to the emperor. They ascended the stairway to their offices and tossed their victims kicking and screaming out of the window. Despite falling around 20 metres, all three men survived, although whether their salvation was owed to divine intervention (as the Catholics later jubilantly claimed) or their fortuitous landing in soft dung is lost to history. Either way the men retreated, leaving the Protestants to seize power and declare their independence in the following days. The rebellion had begun.

What came next would prove pivotal for the future of Europe. Alone and without leadership, Bohemia stood little chance of maintaining its freedom, so it made efforts to woo Protestant lords into taking the kingship. The Elector Palatine and German Prince Frederick V was one such man. As a Protestant he was sympathetic to the Bohemians' plight and was no supporter of the Catholic emperor-elect Ferdinand. Frederick decided to accept the offer and made for Prague towards the end of 1619, just after Emperor Matthias had finally succumbed to illness.

Frederick's court had hoped that with him championing the Protestant cause in the face of Ferdinand's impending coronation, the other European Protestant leaders would heed his rallying cry. Disappointingly, the other nations initially offered very little support, and even the German Protestant Union met his pleas with reluctance. But the new king was not alone. A local Bohemian leader named Thurn had conscripted men and raised an army; the prince Bethlen Gábor of Transylvania would soon pledge his support; and the Duke of Savoy offered to divide the costs of equipping a professional mercenary army. This new force was placed under the command of Ernst von Mansfeld, who wasted little time in successfully besieging Pilsen on behalf of Frederick.

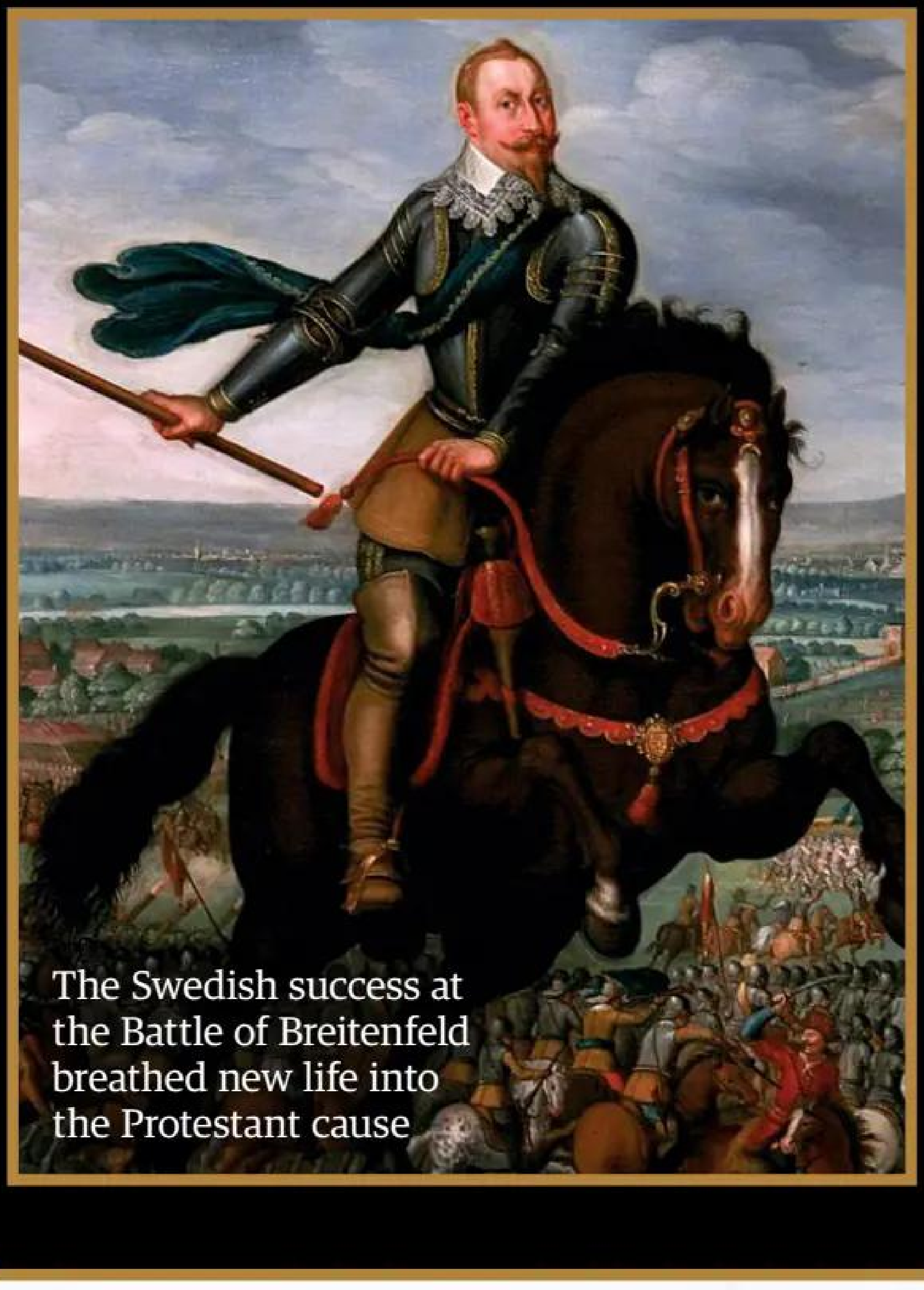
As had been planned, Archduke Ferdinand was elected emperor on 28 August 1619, and one of his first acts upon his ascension was to award the leader of the Catholic League – the Elector of Bavaria, Maximilian – a significant sum and Frederick's stripped electoral title to lead an invasion of Bohemia on his behalf. Meanwhile, the Spanish wasted little time in establishing their foothold in Frederick's abandoned Palatinate region. Their army invaded in a surprise attack, and before

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS

The Swedish king earned the title of Father of Modern Warfare for his military innovations and exploits

Gustav II Adolf – known to history as Gustavus Adolphus – ascended to the Swedish throne in 1611. Gustavus inherited a poor country and an even poorer army, but he swiftly morphed his peasant farmer conscripts into one of Europe's most elite fighting forces. Aware that his cavalry was a weakness, he reorganised his army to maximise the firepower of his infantry and artillery. He packed his frontline full of musketeers and drilled them to alternate their volleys for maximum firing efficiency. Each infantry regiment was additionally equipped with a small, mobile artillery battery that could be moved with the men across the battlefield as required. Gustavus also placed musketeers among his cavalry ranks, where they'd drive off enemy charges with point-blank volleys.

Adolphus hardened his professional army in the Polish-Swedish war of 1626-1629 and received border security and an economic boon from the resulting peace treaty. This left him well prepared to enter the Thirty Years' War with Emperor Ferdinand and the Catholic League, and he used his veteran troops and innovative tactics to reverse the fortunes of the Protestant cause in Germany. After winning multiple major battles, he met his death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632 while fighting on the frontline with his men. Legend says that when an enemy soldier placed a firearm to the wounded king's temple and asked him his name, he accepted his fate with the final words, "I was the King of Sweden."



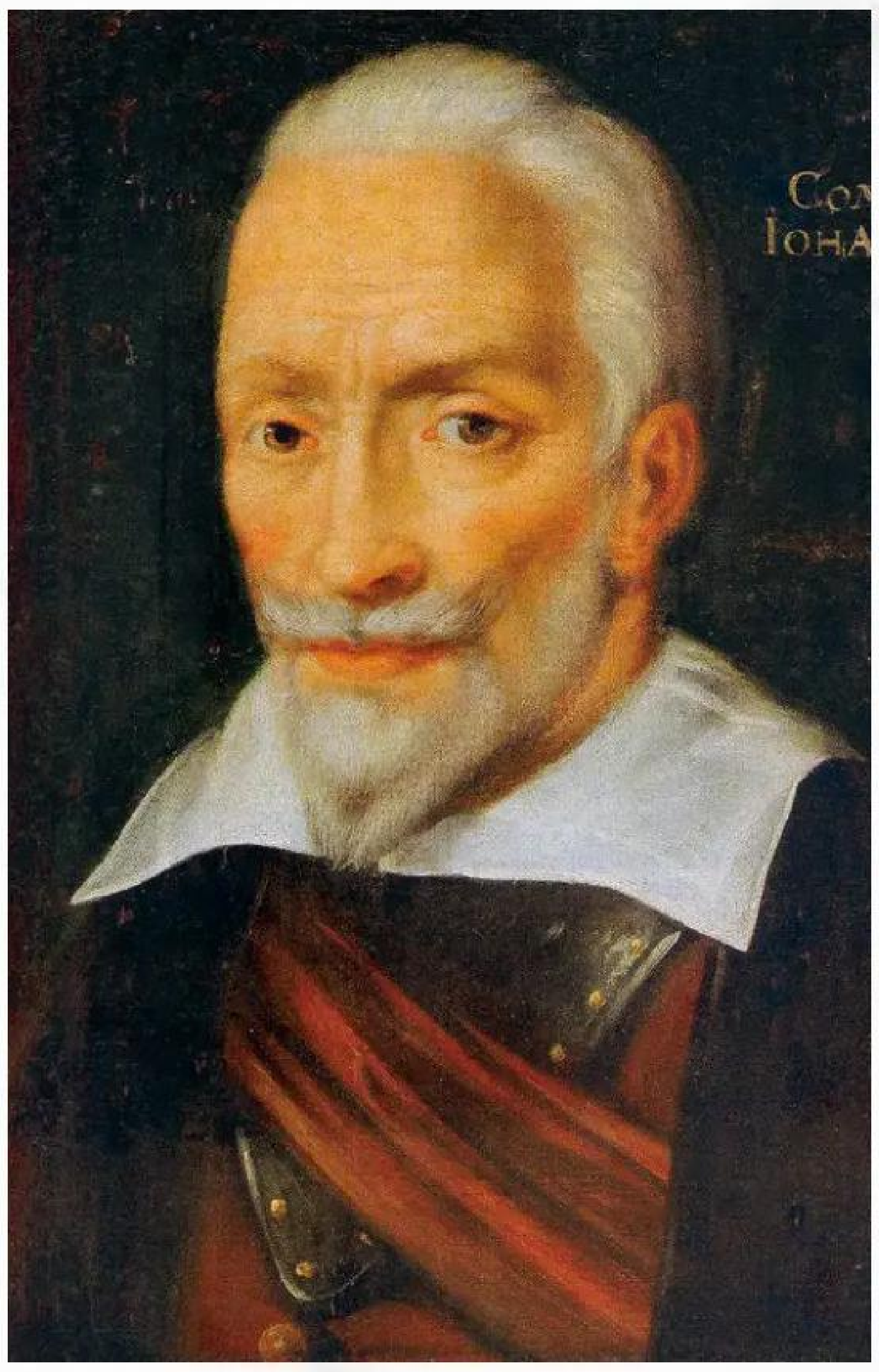
The Swedish success at the Battle of Breitenfeld breathed new life into the Protestant cause long they had besieged Mainz and established themselves in the crucial territory, positioning themselves to invade the Protestant Netherlands at any moment.

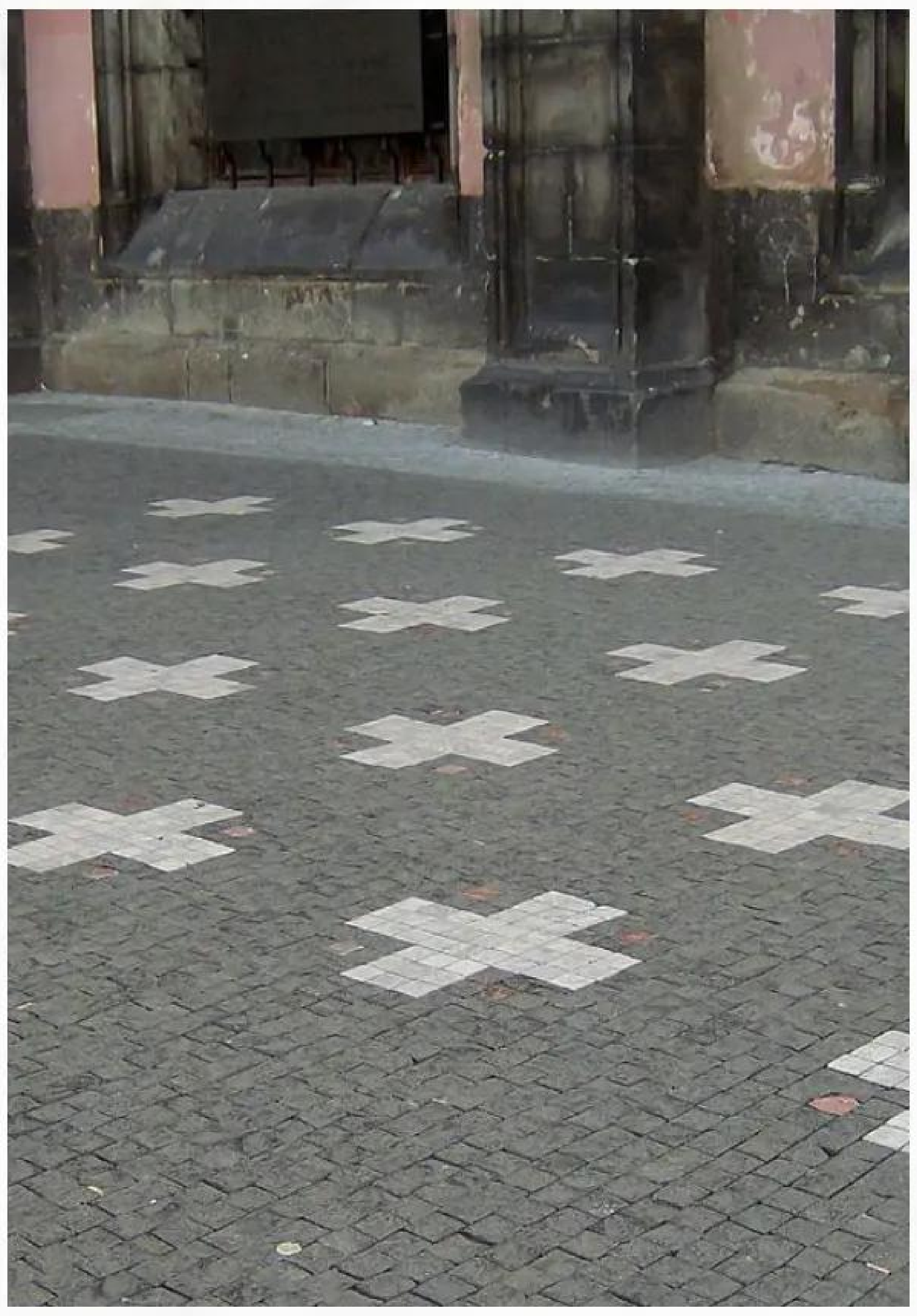
Maximilian's forces, under the command of one Count Tilly, entered Bohemia on 26 September 1620. Ernst von Mansfeld, whose troops had not been paid by Frederick for some time, were reluctant to march to their employer's aid and instead waited patiently at Pilsen for a new contract. This left Thurn's forces, reinforced by contingents of Hungarians, to face Count Tilly's and the imperial forces at White Hill on 8 November just outside the Bohemian capital of Prague. The conscripted Bohemians proved no match for their imperial counterparts and rapidly dissolved after seeing their mounted vanguard retreat. In the wake of his defeat Frederick fled the capital that night. Maximilian occupied Prague and promptly sent word of his victory to the emperor.

Although Frederick's coup was unsuccessful, his fateful decision to abandon the Palatinate had opened the door to the House of Habsburg's broad ambition to invade the Netherlands. The exiled king also helped to prolong the war by refusing to renounce his claim on Bohemia. He managed to inspire new followers to raise forces on his behalf, but these were ruthlessly defeated by Count Tilly before they could merge into a credible threat.

Although Maximilian's army under Tilly was proving invaluable for Emperor Ferdinand, he was unhappy at being so reliant on the Catholic League. Fortunately for him, a man named Albrecht von Wallenstein offered a way out of his predicament. Wallenstein was a minor noble who had amassed significant wealth through marriage to a wealthy widow, a woman who had left her fortune to him upon her death. But he had also garnered acclaim as a commander, and Ferdinand requested that he raise and lead an army in his name. Wallenstein accepted his offer and wasted little time in first cutting off and then defeating Mansfeld at Dessau Bridge (today located in eastern Germany) before sending the commander fleeing south. The now old and fatigued general succumbed to illness in the following weeks, ending the hopes of Frederick's forces in the field.

Pouring fuel onto an already raging fire, Denmark had decided to join the war in 1625 under King Christian IV. The Danish monarch feared that his rival Sweden would take up the Protestant fight and eventually claim dominion over the entire Balkan Sea, so he determined to beat them to it. While Wallenstein was chasing Mansfeld, Christian's forces were engaged in a cat-and-mouse chase with Tilly. The King of Denmark found himself outmanoeuvred by the Bavarian commander and was forced to give battle as he attempted a retreat. The Danish forces had more cannons than their adversaries but failed to make good use of them, and after the infantry made contact, Tilly's cavalry managed to outflank Christian's men on both sides, obliterating them in a pincer movement.





LEFT These crosses in Prague's Old Town Square represent the 27 rebellious ringleaders executed by Ferdinand's forces after the city was retaken

FAR LEFT A talented general who won many battles, Tilly's legacy was tarnished by the Sack of Magdeburg

BELOW Matthias' governors miraculously survived the fall of 20 metres from the top window

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

Christian fled northward with his shattered army as Wallenstein returned triumphant from harrying Mansfeld. He joined forces with Tilly but refused to play the role of his subordinate. The two Catholic armies moved in pursuit, entered the northern Danish-held duchy of Holstein and overran it. Wallenstein was awarded the title of Duke of Mecklenburg for his trouble, much to Tilly and Maximilian's chagrin.

Nearly a decade after the Thirty Years' War had begun, the Protestants had yet to win any major encounters. But the tide was soon to change. Wallenstein had his eyes set on the port town of Stralsund (in northeast Germany), which he set to besieging in July 1628. Stralsund was well guarded by a force of 5,000 mercenaries, levies and citizens and reinforced by Sweden during the siege, marking the kingdom's entry into the war. The weather also conspired against Wallenstein, the arrival of heavy rains washing away his dreams of seizing the city, his men unable to launch an effective assault in the deluge.

Sweden's entry into the maelstrom came at a fortunate time for the Protestants, as Christian and his 6,000 troops were about to be beaten once again, this time by Wallenstein. Upon his defeat the Danish king was forced to sign the lenient Peace of Lübeck, which left him with all his titles provided that he remained neutral for the rest of the war.

With the Catholic forces riding high, Emperor Ferdinand decided that 1629 was an excellent time to enact the Edict of Restitution. This text was an aggressive move against Protestants within the empire, as it forbade them from governing over Catholic lands. The Protestant German princes were disgusted by this affront to liberty. They called for a diet to discuss the edict, which was held in Regensburg in 1630. Ferdinand was adamant that the edict remain but he paid for it dearly, as the princes demanded that Wallenstein be stripped of his command and the imperial army be mostly dissolved. Such was Ferdinand's iron resolve when it came to restricting religious freedoms that he agreed to these draconian terms.

The Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus had political as well as religious motives to enter the war. He was a Protestant, but more pressingly he feared that the House of Habsburg would help the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth push their claim on the Swedish throne, a mortal threat to his own personal wellbeing. He resolved to seize the initiative and swiftly established a foothold on the German side of the Balkans, signing the Treaty of Stettin at the end of summer 1630 in order to gain formal control of Pomerania, which bordered the sea.

Although not yet prepared to engage in actual combat, France agreed to send funds to support the Swedish war effort. This sudden influx of wealth saw Adolphus' army swell to over 36,000.

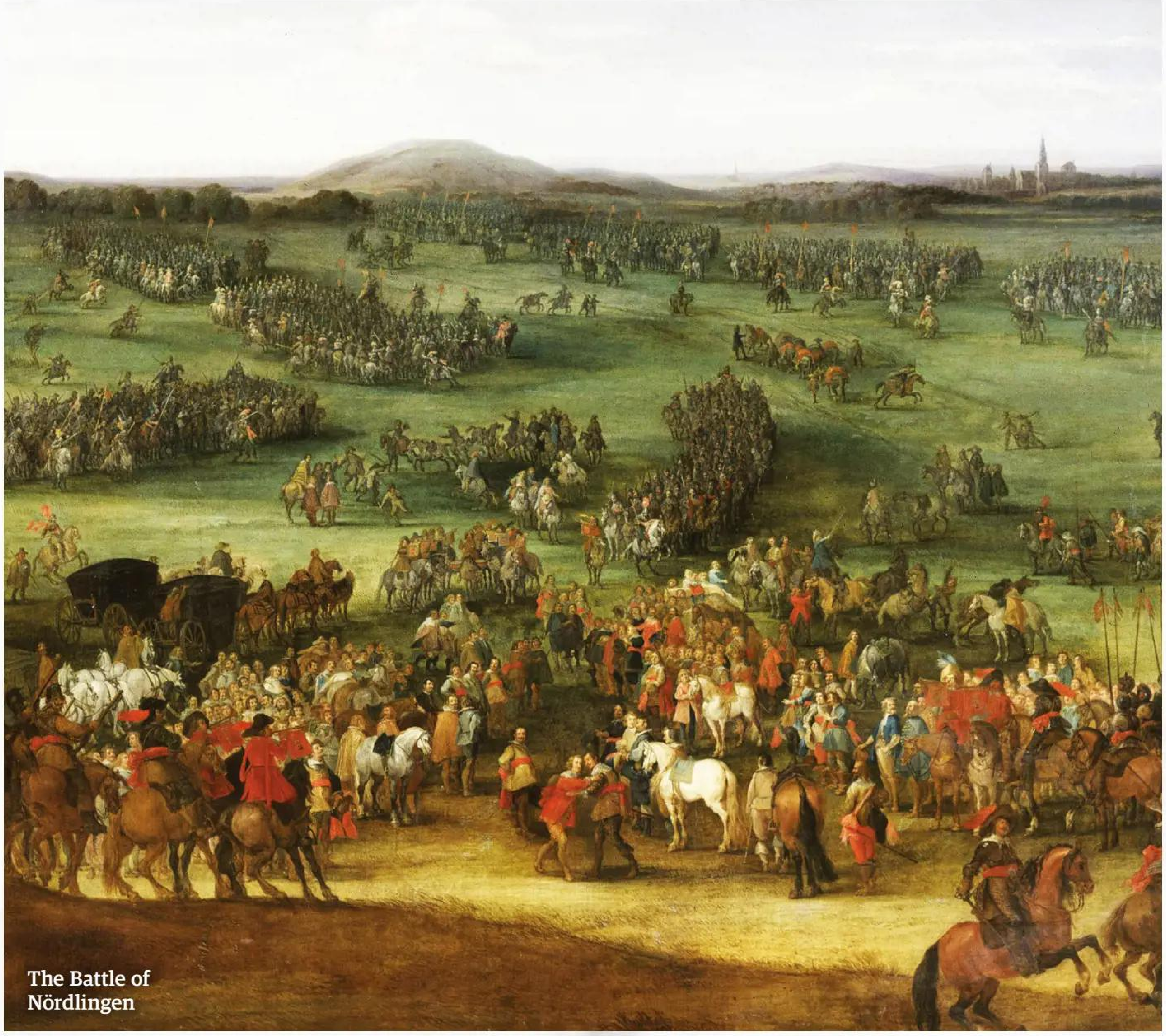
For their part, the German Protestants were unsure of how to react to Sweden's intervention. They weren't happy with Emperor Ferdinand's new edict, but neither were they pleased about the presence of a foreign 'liberator', who they saw simply as an invader. Then, on 20 May 1631, Tilly inadvertently helped his enemies to put aside their differences when he ordered the brutal Sack of Magdeburg.

Over four days his troops rampaged throughout the city, ruthlessly cutting soldiers and civilians down and torching buildings. Appalled by such wanton cruelty, Protestants and moderates across Europe came together in their outrage, a move that ultimately encouraged the Protestant German princes to combine their forces with the Swedish, thereby inflating their joint army to approximately 60,000 men.

Despite his inferior numbers of approximately 35,000 soldiers, Tilly eagerly met the Swedish-German forces near the village of Breitenfeld (north of Leipzig). The Swedes and allied Germans arranged themselves separately, with the Germans occupying the left flank. Wary of the skilled Swedish soldiers, Tilly sent most of his men to engage the Germans, essentially ignoring the Swedish line. His plan was initially successful, as the Protestant Germans crumbled under the imperial advance. However, the professional Swedish army swiftly wheeled around to face Tilly's forces and moved forwards to engage them with confidence.

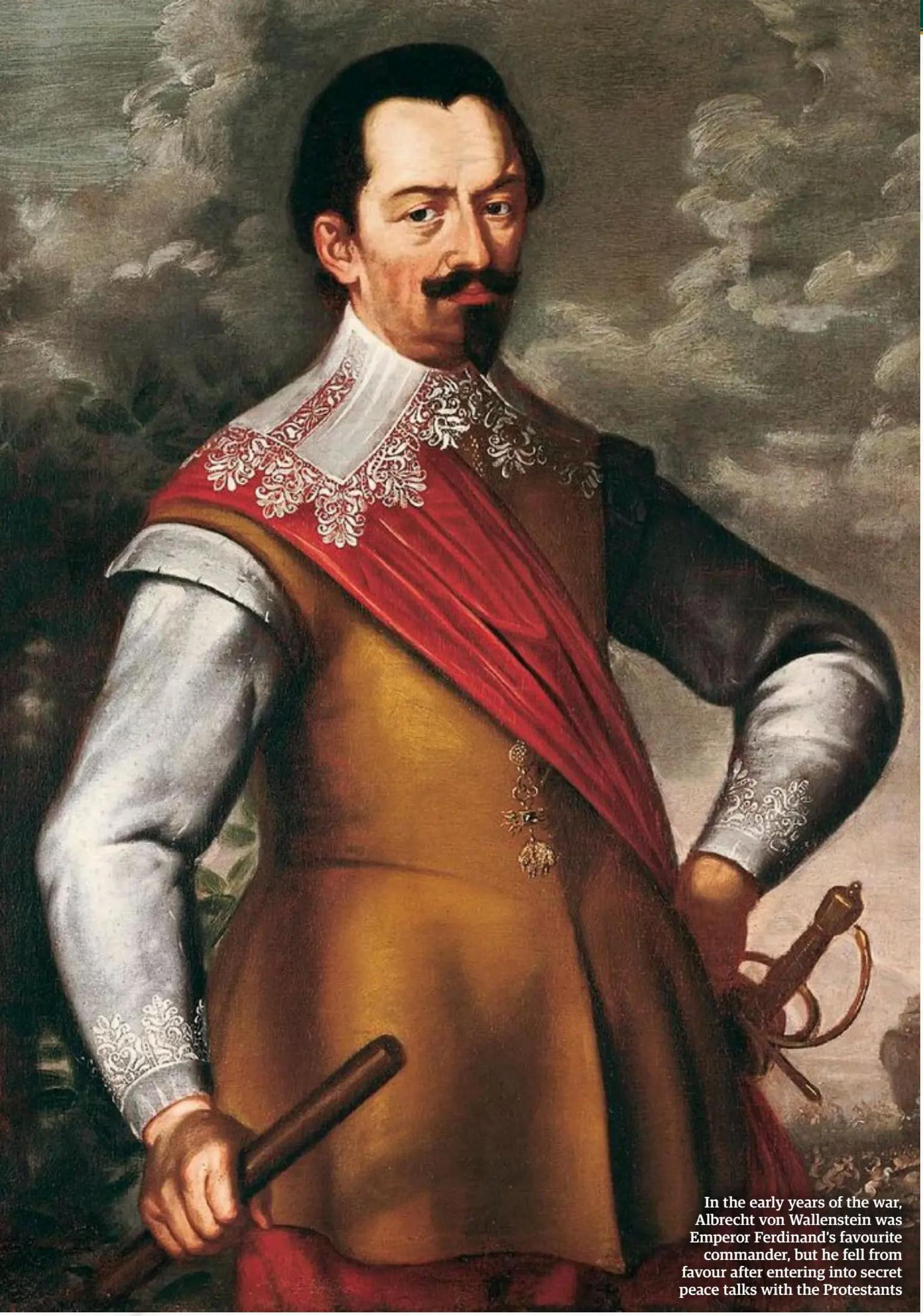
Meanwhile, Adolphus personally led a daring charge to capture Tilly's artillery and set it firing on the imperial lines. Sweden's own artillery was dragged onto the other flank, and soon a hail of cannonballs and musket fire was raining down on the pinned imperial forces, causing devastating losses. Tilly had been resoundingly defeated.

The Protestants followed up this monumental success by capturing Frankfurt, Mainz and Heidelberg before the end of 1631, while one of the Protestant German generals also successfully



The Battle of Nördlingen

"Wary of the skilled Swedish soldiers, Tilly sent most of his men to engage the Germans"



In the early years of the war, Albrecht von Wallenstein was Emperor Ferdinand's favourite commander, but he fell from favour after entering into secret peace talks with the Protestants

THE BATTLE OF ROCROI

Duke d'Enghien's crowning glory

Duke d'Enghien was a young French noble of just 21 years on 19 May 1643. He had just received news that the King of France had died from an illness, but his bigger concern was the 18,000 Spanish infantry and 8,000 cavalrymen that stood between him and the town of Rocroi. The French and Spanish forces had lined up in the pre-dawn gloom, and d'Enghien signalled the advance at sunrise.

The Spanish commander, Melo, had placed a contingent of musketeers in a strip of woodland to cover his left flank. These were easily ousted, and d'Enghien attacked the now unguarded flank while his infantrymen engaged the centre and charged the enemy's right. D'Enghien routed his opposition but noticed the other flank's charge had been repulsed and the centre was struggling. The young commander sent some of his troops in pursuit of the defeated enemy while he himself led a bold charge against the centre. His horse crashed through the leading Spanish line and into the novice German, Italian and Walloon troops. These men quickly withdrew, allowing d'Enghien to smash into Melo's right flank.

Realising he was being enveloped, Melo fled. His veteran infantry fought on despite being abandoned by their commander, but their cause was hopeless. Spain's military had been decapitated. The road to peace had opened.

invaded Bohemia and recaptured Prague. When the campaigning season resumed in the spring of 1632, Adolphus vigorously pursued Tilly and found his army entrenched near the city of Rain (in modern-day Bavaria). A river separated Adolphus from the opposing army, but his talent as a shrewd tactician enabled him to exploit the terrain to his advantage.

Adolphus used a decoy force to trick Tilly into thinking he was making a straight crossing while simultaneously crossing other contingents at two separate points along the river. The plan was a success, and Tilly was mortally wounded by a cannonball in the fighting. It was another Swedish victory and another crushing defeat for imperial forces, who were now without a loyal standing army in the empire.

As the Spanish forces were still engaged in the Netherlands, the emperor had little choice but to call on Wallenstein. The veteran accepted his summons, raised an army in a matter of weeks and by May 1632 had liberated Prague from the Protestants. He then moved west with 32,000 men to face the Swedes, absorbing the remnants of Tilly's army as he moved to engage. Adolphus and Wallenstein first met at Nuremberg, but their decisive encounter would take place at Lützen in November 1632.

By the winter of 1632, Wallenstein had already sent some of his men into winter quarters, confident the Swedish would make no further movements so late in the year. Having withdrawn to Lützen to see out the coldest months, Wallenstein reinforced his position with trenches and placed his artillery in strong defensive positions. Protected by his 16,000 remaining troops, the town represented a formidable obstacle. Yet despite this, Adolphus was not to be deterred from a battle.

Relying on the element of surprise, the Swedish commander marched his forces towards Lützen, intent on taking the town. However, his efforts at deception were rendered futile when word reached Wallenstein of the Swedish advance. Fearful that Lützen would fall into Swedish hands, Wallenstein ordered that the town be set ablaze. He then arranged his cavalry into a defensive concave shape and retained his elite musketeers in reserve to reinforce as necessary.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

THE MASSACRE OF MAGDEBURG

Count Tilly's mistake cost thousands of innocent lives and turned many against the Catholic cause

In April 1631, Count Tilly of the Catholic League joined his lieutenant, Gottfried Pappenheim, outside Magdeburg. The city had recently declared for the King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, and had refused to surrender. Angry at the prolonged siege and anxious about the Swedish army's impending arrival, on 20 May a contingent of troops took the initiative and launched a surprise assault that captured some of the walls. The defence of Magdeburg had failed, and destruction was soon to follow.

The men unleashed their frustrations on the citizenry by raping, stealing and murdering their way through the streets. Their commanders, who were at first powerless to stop them, could only watch on in horror as multiple fires sprouted up across the city. These quickly raged out of control in the blasting wind and before long the air was thick with smoke and flames. By the time the fires had subsided the city was a smouldering ruin.

Of the 30,000 inhabitants within the city prior to the assault, 25,000 had died in the slaughter. Tilly had their bodies cast into the Elbe, and the bloated corpses piled up in the reeds, some with their arms aloft as if raised in prayer. Many of the surviving women and children would soon die from exposure, and the men were forced into servitude if they could not pay their ransom. A census the following year would find that only a few hundred people had persisted in the city. Magdeburg had been stripped of life, and only a phantom of its former self remained.

The two sides entered combat, and Wallenstein's artillery quickly began to inflict heavy losses on the Swedes. Adolphus could see that his right flank was wavering, so he personally led a charge to reinforce it. The burning of Lützen had rendered visibility low as smoke filled the air, and Adolphus was soon lost in the melee. Separated from his men, he received a gunshot wound, as did his horse. Struggling to control it, he rode into enemy lines, where he was shot again, this time fatally.

News of Adolphus' demise rippled through the Protestant ranks, causing them to lose heart and withdraw by mid-afternoon. But their new commander, Prince Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar, brought up the reserve and urged the men onwards. The Swedish were ultimately triumphant, but theirs was to be a Pyrrhic victory; they had suffered approximately 10,000 losses compared to the enemy's 12,000 and their industrious and inventive king now lay dead on the battlefield.

Sweden was bruised by the loss Adolphus, but it had not lost its resolve. In 1633 it entered a formal alliance with the French and Protestant German princes as part of the Heilbronn League. At first Sweden remained the dominant military partner in this arrangement, but this dynamic would change after the Battle of Nördlingen in September 1634.

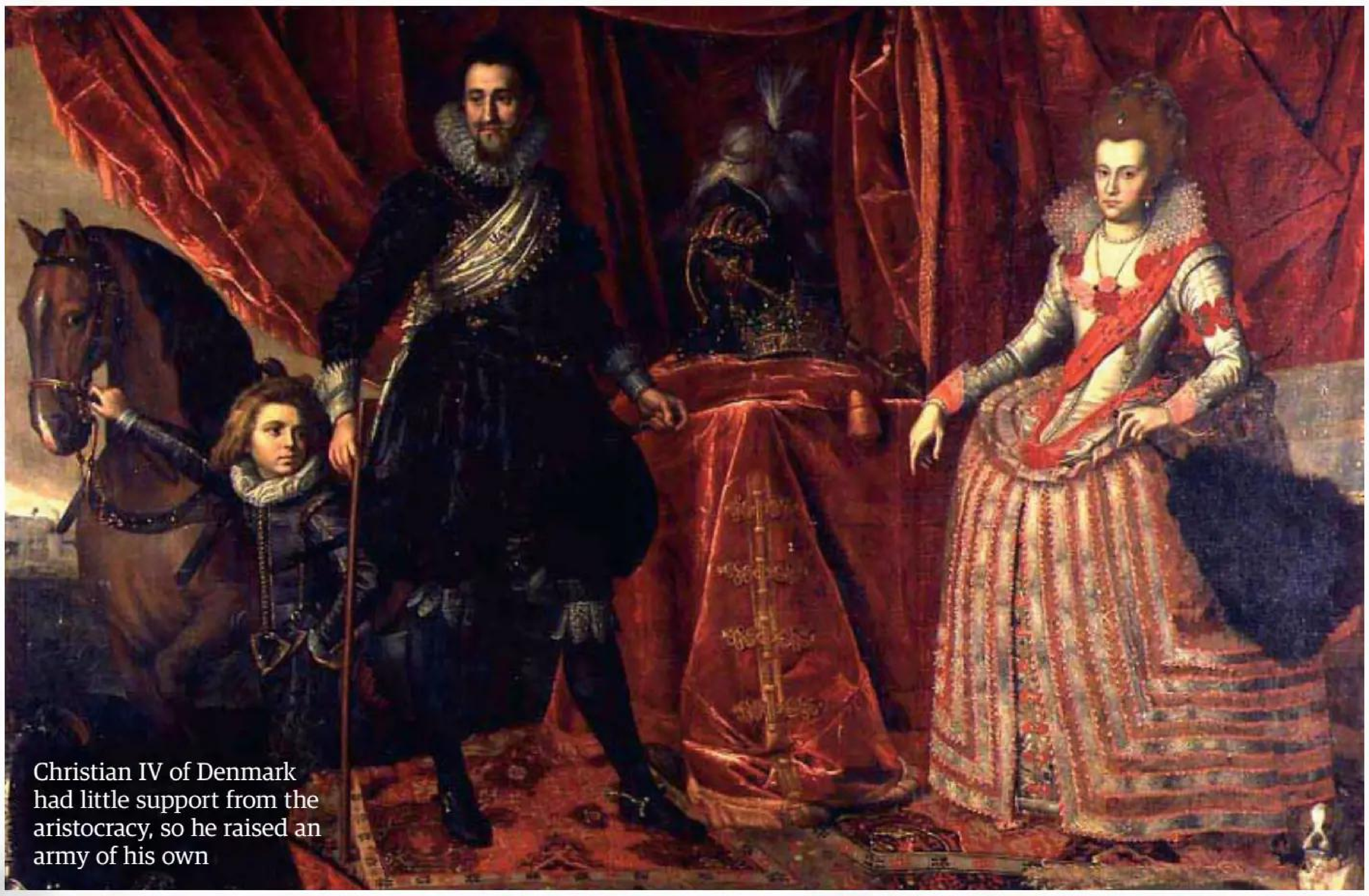
Without their king, the ill-disciplined Swedish troops committed one reckless charge after another into the Catholic forces led by Emperor Ferdinand's son – the King of Hungary – and the Cardinal-Infante of the Spanish Netherlands, who had come to reinforce his cousin. The Protestants all but annihilated their own forces thanks to their lacklustre tactics, and their carelessness ended Sweden's involvement as a major military player for several years.

Once more in the ascendancy, Ferdinand forced the Protestant German princes to come to terms at the Peace of Prague in 1635. His former general Wallenstein had been assassinated the previous year, so the emperor was elated when the princes agreed to dissolve both the Catholic League and newly formed Heilbronn League and instead form a unified army under the Emperor's control. In return for power over the military, Ferdinand agreed that the north of the empire would be free once again to practice moderate Protestantism. These concessions essentially ended the religious civil war that had initiated the conflict in the Holy Roman Empire.

One last German prince remained defiant, however – Duke Bernard of Saxe-Weimar. The former commander of the Swedish forces aligned himself with the French, who declared war on Spain in 1635. From this moment on, the primacy of religion, the cause of the divide between the Catholic and Protestant states and the driving force behind the Thirty Years' War, was usurped by international politics. The two major forces of France and Spain were both Catholic, but unfortunately for the long-suffering Germans they had chosen their country as the battleground to decide who was the major power on the continent.

The French war effort didn't get off to an excellent start. Their troops were poorly trained and their commanders lacked the ingenuity of the Swedes. Seeing the vulnerability of the French, the Cardinal-Infante moved across the Rhine with a mind to invade Paris. He was supported to the south by another imperial force, but its movement across the Rhine was obstructed by Duke Bernard. Reports of Swedish threats to the rear then pulled the imperials back into Germany. The Cardinal-Infante was reluctant to invade without aid, so he too turned back, leaving the French slightly bewildered but undoubtedly relieved that the attack on their capital had failed to materialise.

Emperor Ferdinand II died in 1637 and was immediately succeeded by his son, Ferdinand III. The former emperor had likely died feeling



Christian IV of Denmark had little support from the aristocracy, so he raised an army of his own that he'd left the position more powerful than when he'd first occupied it, but his successor would soon undo all of his work.

The French-allied forces had recently been enjoying parallel success: the resurgent Swedes had defeated an imperial army at Wittstock in the northeast of the empire and Duke Bernard had successfully starved the Rhine town of Breisach into submission. Duke Bernard passed away from natural causes in 1639, extinguishing the last ember of major German military involvement in the conflict. And yet the war trundled onward.

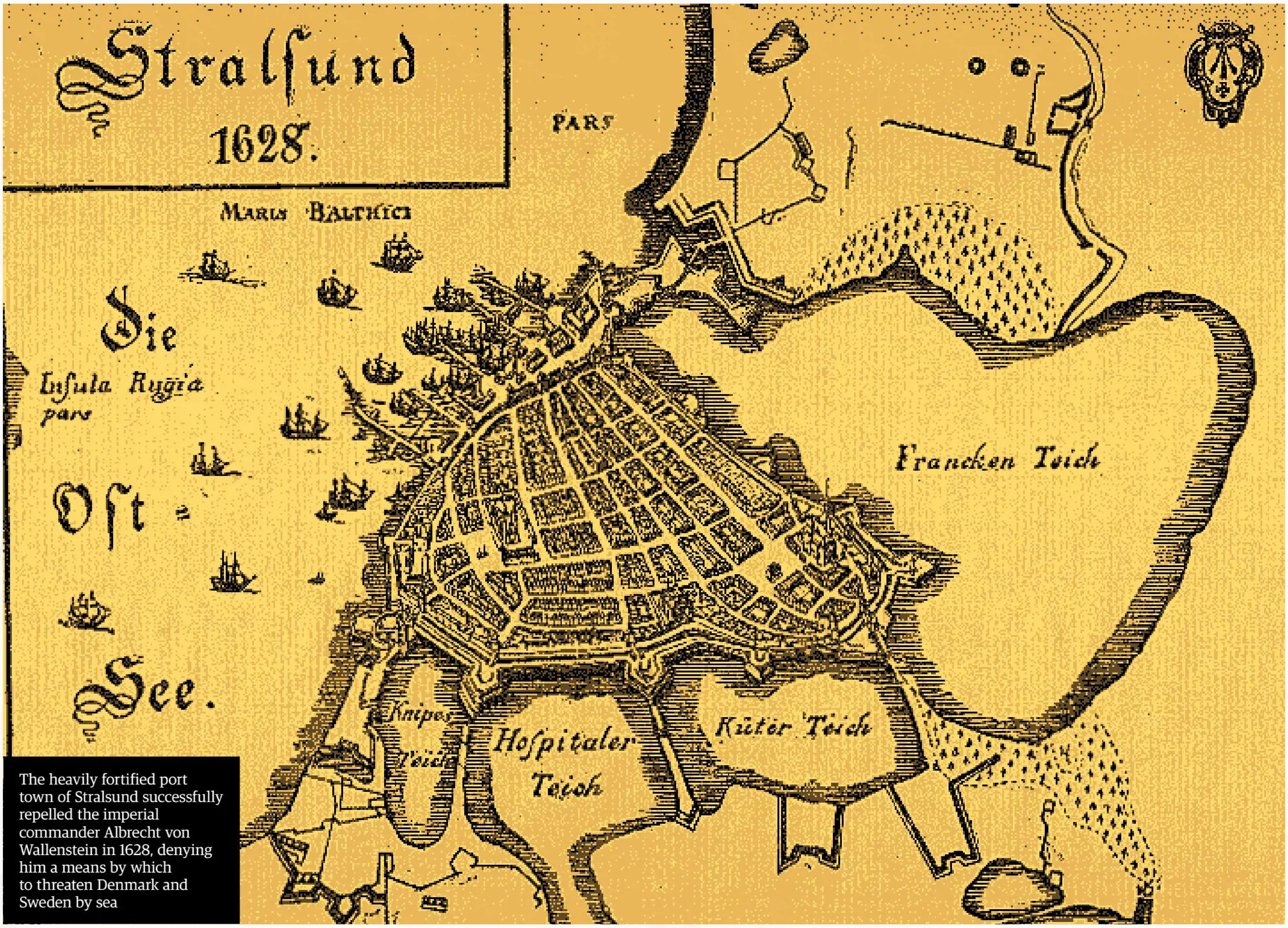
In 1642, the Second Battle of Breitenfeld saw the Swedish commander Lennart Torstensson, who had served under Gustavus Adolphus, win another victory over an imperial army. This put pressure on Ferdinand III to make a stronger conciliatory peace with the Swedish, but it would be a French victory in 1643 that would remove Ferdinand's Spanish allies from the board and render him powerless.

The French had been slowly improving throughout the war. Opting for quality over quantity due to their limited funds, the French shunned the practice of immediately recruiting captured soldiers into their army. This had the advantage of leaving them with a veteran, unified force proud to fight under the French banner. The French commander Duke d'Enghien used this now elite weapon to best the Spanish army amassed outside the town of Rocroi and in doing so obliterated Spanish military might.

With the French-Swedish alliance all but victorious, peace talks opened at the end of 1644 but progressed at a snail's pace. For their part, the German princes were particularly war weary. Personal ambition coupled with devout passions had driven them into the conflict all those decades ago, but now they felt that they'd suffered enough. In fact, it was the peasantry of Germany that had been hit particularly hard by the Thirty Years' War. The ruling class had dragged them into the conflict, but it had been their crops that had been razed, their homes destroyed, their finances depleted by taxes, their families forced into cannibalism inside besieged cities and their men pushed into battle.

The battles themselves had inflicted hundreds of thousands of casualties, but the main ravages of war were felt by the families who had no means of feeding their children and no shelter in which to protect them. Exposure, starvation and disease had claimed countless lives and cost Germany dearly. Prince Maximilian of Bavaria, for one, was devastated by the sights he saw in his home country. It had once been so prosperous, but by the end of the Thirty Years' War, the lands of the Holy Roman Empire were left in ruins. Ultimately, the reach and power of the Catholic Church would never fully recover.

> *"The ill-disciplined Swedish troops committed one reckless charge after another"*



The heavily fortified port town of Stralsund successfully repelled the imperial commander Albrecht von Wallenstein in 1628, denying him a means by which to threaten Denmark and Sweden by sea

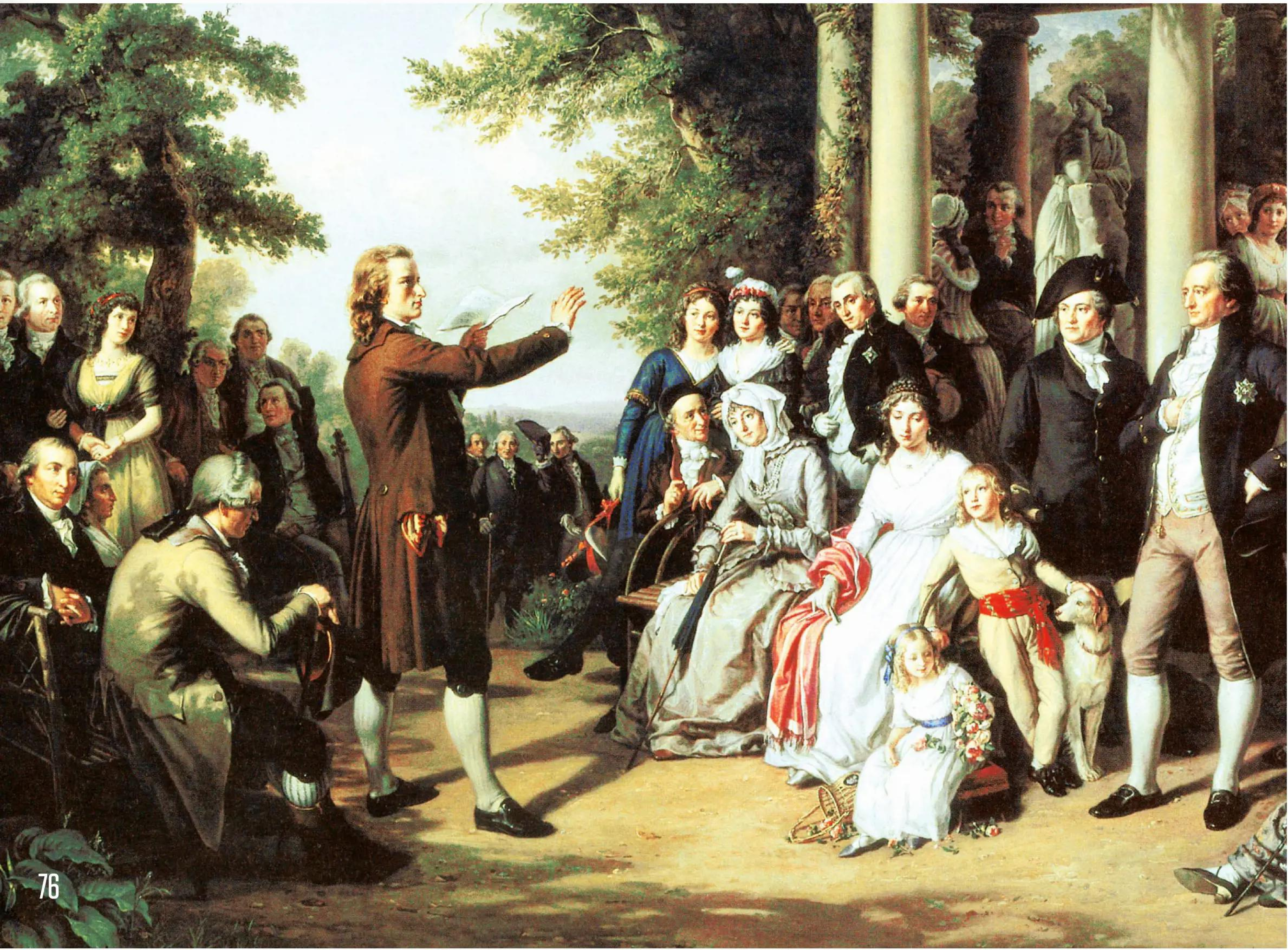
Images: Getty Images, Alamy

1685-1815

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

In Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries, the Age of Enlightenment embraced a new way of looking at the world

Written by Catherine Curzon



The Age of Enlightenment changed the intellectual face of the world from its beginnings in the late 17th century, as new light was shed on traditional institutions, values and beliefs. The Enlightenment encouraged people to think for themselves and to reshape society via rationalism, applying scientific principles to every aspect of life.

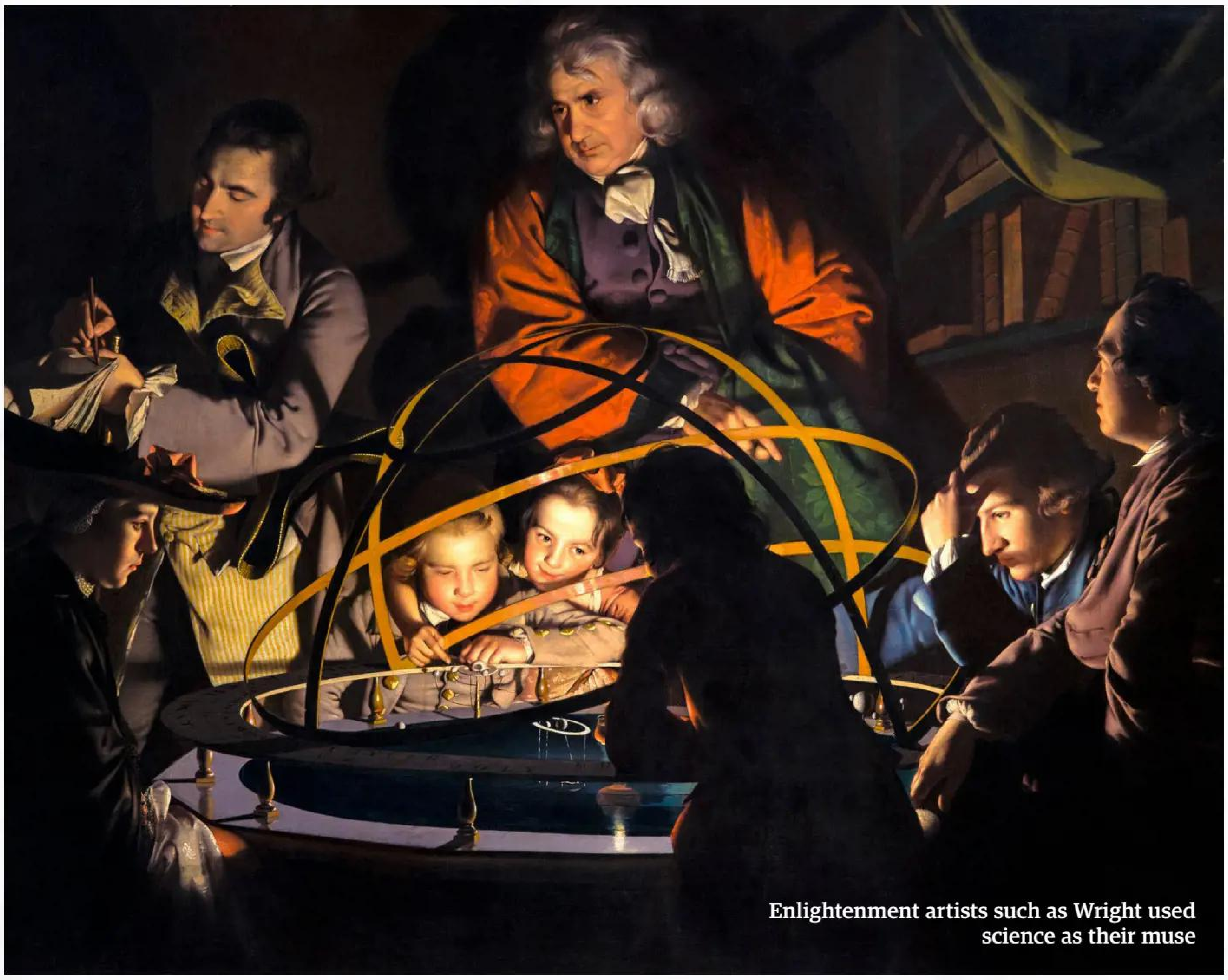
Followers of the Enlightenment believed that the world could only be improved through an approach based on fact, reason and enquiry, resulting in a new future of tolerance, liberty, and individual rights. In the newly enlightened future, people would no longer be governed by the church or kings whose power existed by so-called divine right; instead, argued the Enlightenment thinkers, church and state would be separate entities. After all, in a world in which Isaac Newton had successfully established an equation that would predict the motion of the planets themselves, the heavens were no longer the realm of religion alone; instead, humans' rational mind could reveal the deepest secrets of the cosmos itself.

Many of the central figures of the Enlightenment were philosophers such as Voltaire, whose commitment to the Age of Reason was all-consuming. In his works, he argued that reason was the only path to social progress and that there was no authority that was exempt from being challenged. Voltaire believed in free speech and a free press and, even though he advocated religious tolerance, he encouraged the church and its followers to question everything through the lens of reason.

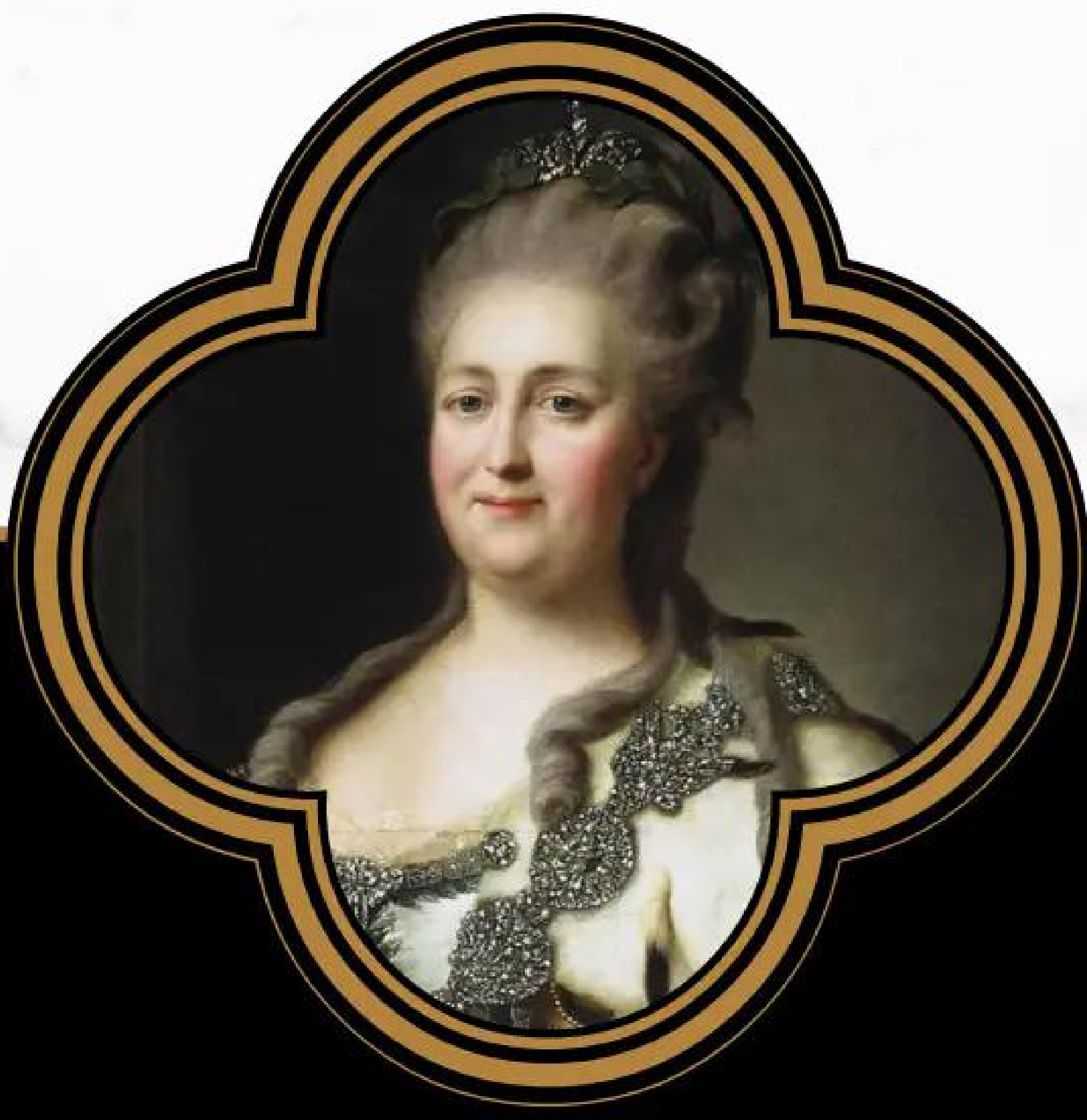
Also central to the Enlightenment was Diderot, whose mammoth 28-volume *Encyclopédie* took more than two decades to complete and was intended as the most comprehensive collection of knowledge that the world had ever seen. The keywords were order, logic and reason, but this wasn't a world in which the working class and poor – so lauded by Enlightenment philosophers – could tread. When the likes of Adam Smith were busy arguing for a new economy in which the state played little part and people were allowed to self-govern, many were too busy simply surviving to indulge in the fruits of the Enlightenment.

Even Marie Antoinette read Rousseau, who argued that everyone should throw off the chains of society and return to a more innocent state. People should be natural, simple, and free of the trappings of luxury. Only then, he argued, would compassion find a voice. What Marie Antoinette made of that as she strolled through the Hall of Mirrors is anybody's guess.

With its focus on democracy, freedom and the right to question the accepted order, Enlightenment political theory rejected that any monarch had a divine right to rule. Political philosopher Montesquieu's proposed separation of government into the executive, the legislative and the judicial – each independent of the other and all independent of the monarch – envisioned a system in which no single power could ever dominate the others. This theory was adopted by the delegates of the Constitutional Convention in 1787 and is reflected in the US Constitution. It was also in opposition to France's administrative structure, which was dominated by king, clergy and aristocracy.


Enlightenment artists such as Wright used science as their muse

> *"In the newly enlightened future, people would no longer be governed by the church or kings"*

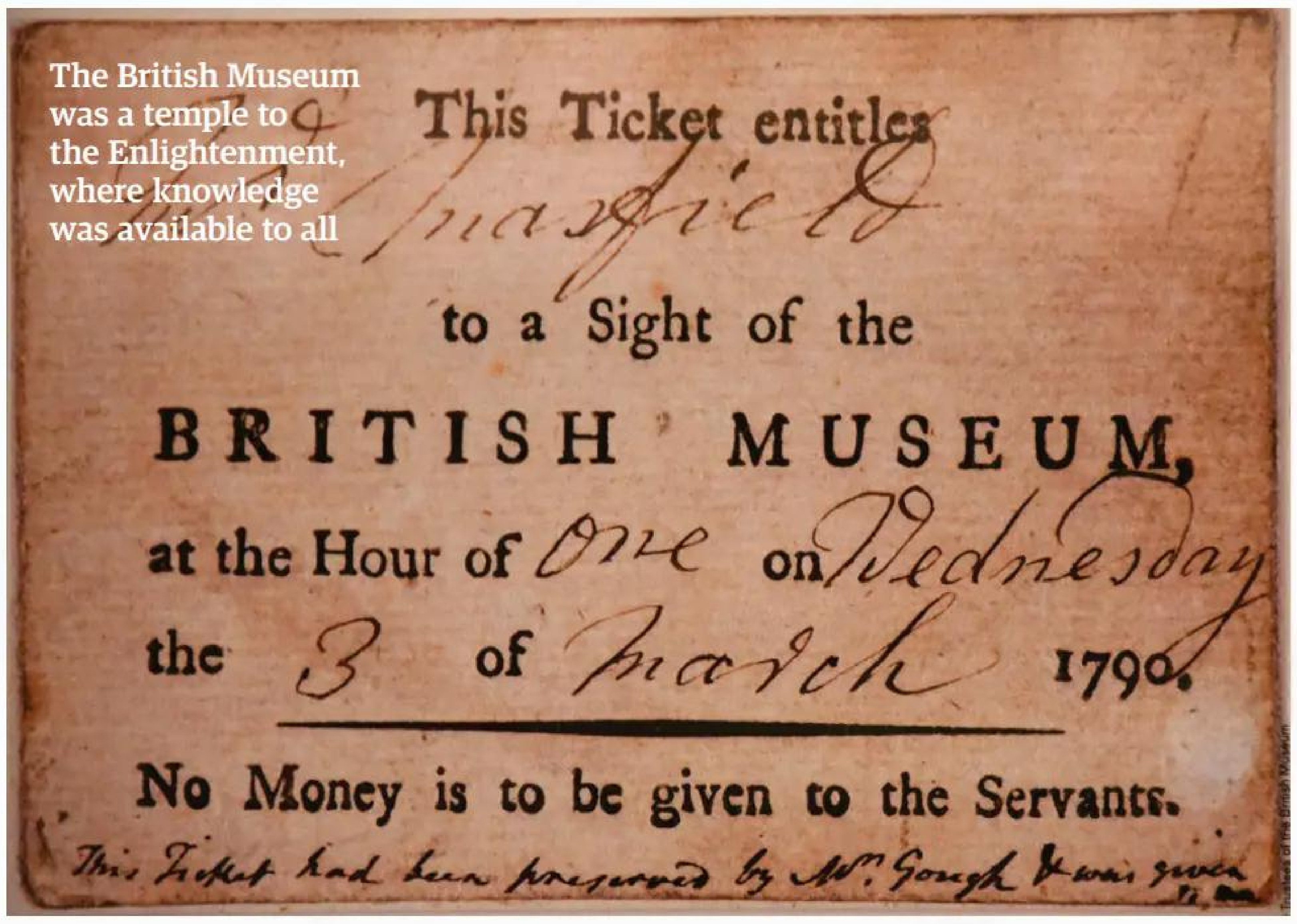


ENLIGHTENED MONARCHS

As the world changed, wise monarchs changed with it

When the divine right of royalty to rule came under scrutiny, enlightened monarchs were quick to establish a different order, thus ensuring that their power remained unchallenged. Rather than a divine right, argued the likes of Catherine II of Russia and Frederick the Great, their experience and steady hand was what made them destined to rule. These so-called enlightened monarchs favoured modernisation and were encouraging of the arts and sciences and some reform, though it was not always extensive.

Enlightened absolutists believed that their power was part of a social contract by which they were duty-bound to improve their subjects' lives. Catherine and Frederick invited philosophers to their courts and actively embraced Enlightenment ideals, overhauling laws and administrative practices and ushering in new eras of art and cultures. Unfortunately, not all enlightened monarchs enjoyed such success; for Emperor Joseph II of Austria, an overenthusiastic reformer who introduced change after change at a rate of knots, the result was discord but for others, such as Catherine and Frederick, it was a long and lauded reign.


This Ticket entitles

Mansfield

to a Sight of the

BRITISH MUSEUM,

at the Hour of One on Wednesday

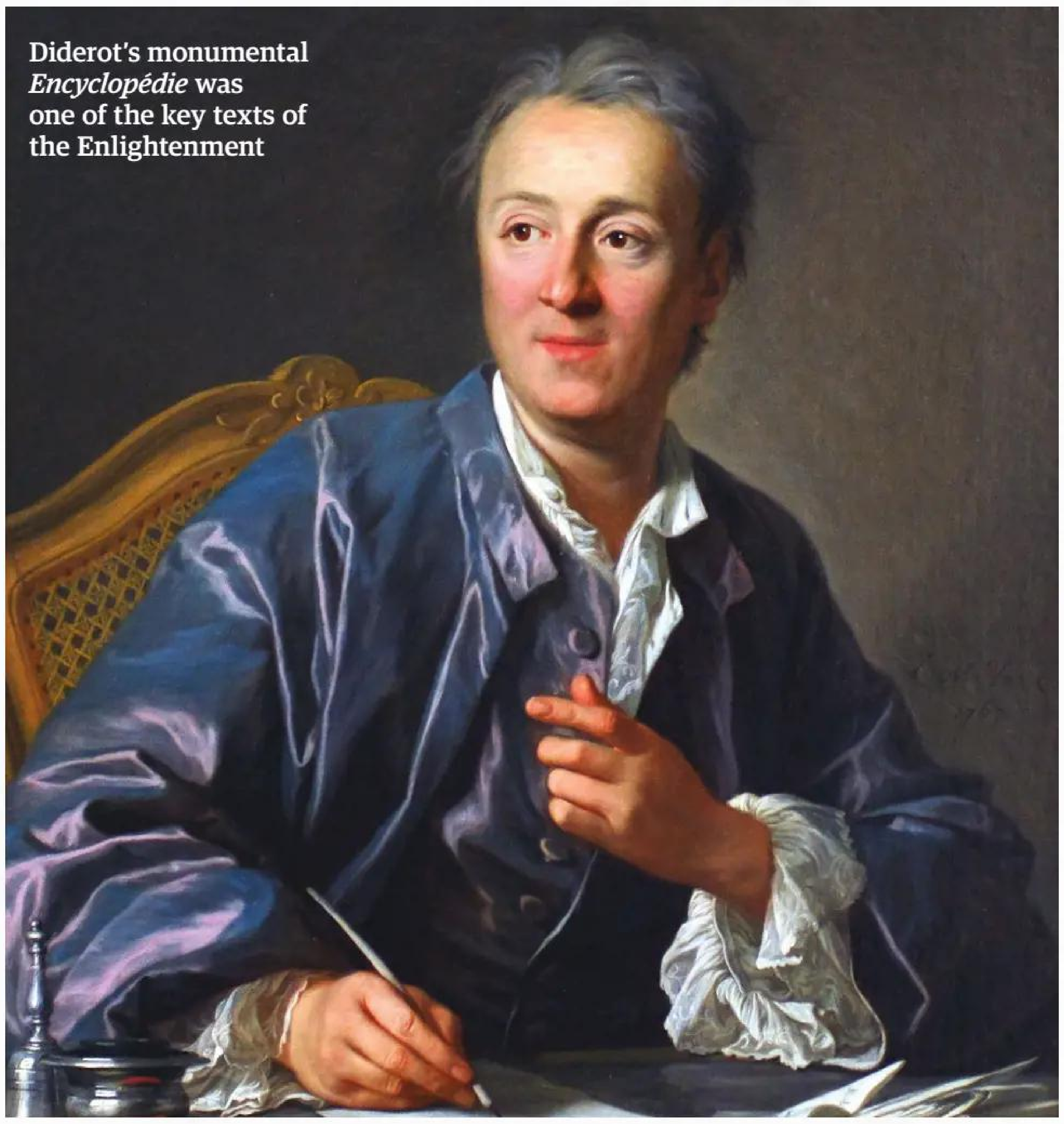
the 3 of March 1790.

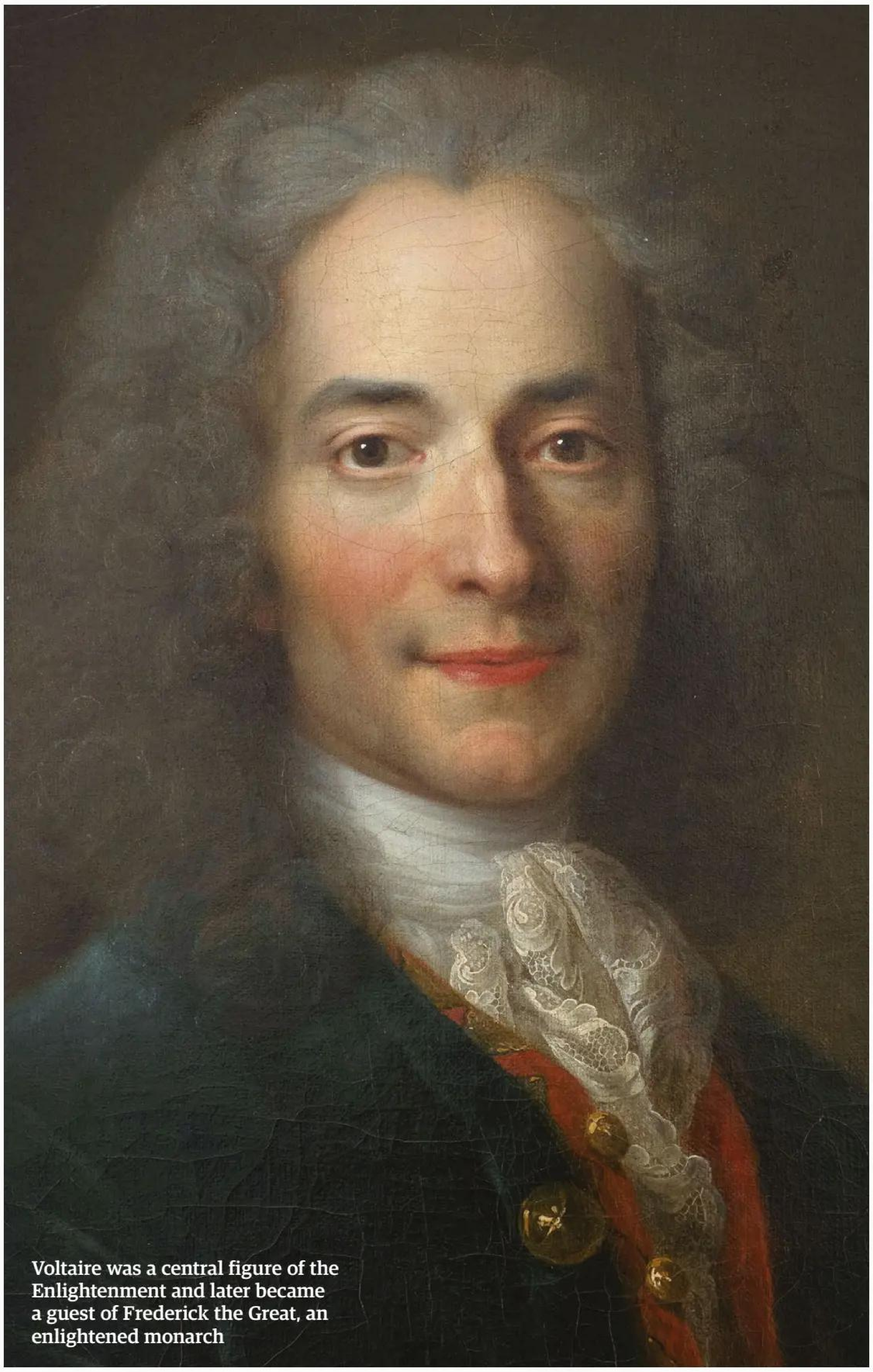
No Money is to be given to the Servants.

This Ticket had been preserved by Mr. Gough & was given

Trustees of the British Museum

The British Museum was a temple to the Enlightenment, where knowledge was available to all


Diderot's monumental *Encyclopédie* was one of the key texts of the Enlightenment

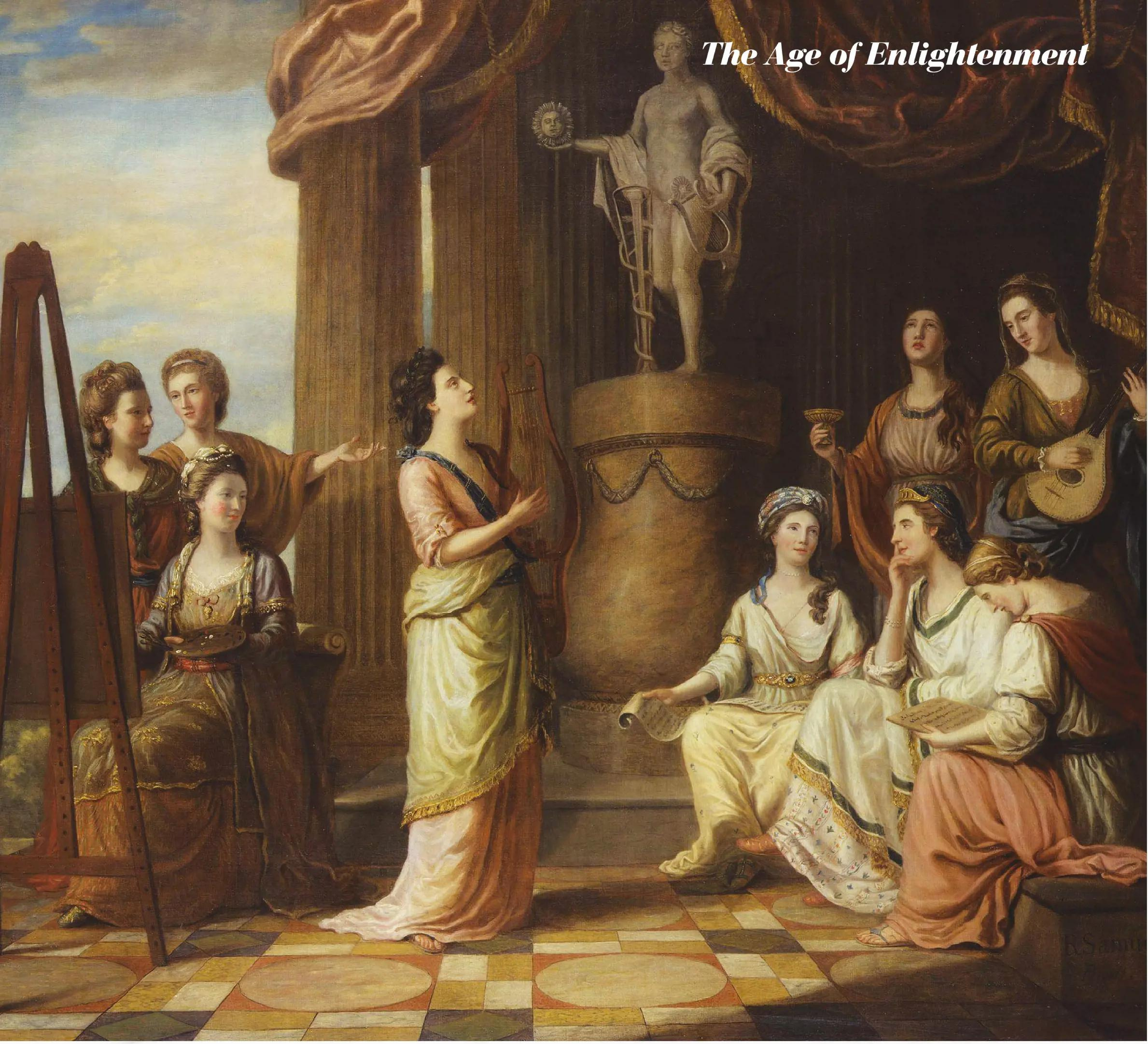

Voltaire was a central figure of the Enlightenment and later became a guest of Frederick the Great, an enlightened monarch

This, of course, would be thrown out in the bloodshed of the French Revolution. Man should help man, argued the thinkers of the Enlightenment, promoting his natural rights and interests without interference from church or throne room.

Science had never been more popular than it was during the Age of Enlightenment. With literacy rates increasing, an inquisitive population wanted to learn more about the world in which they lived, and public lectures were the obvious answer. Lectures were held at all hours to ensure that even those who went out to work could attend and audiences contained a broad range of social classes as well as plenty of women, too. Enlightenment pamphlets were must-reads and became important propaganda weapons in charged climates such as the North American colonies and Revolutionary France, where they sold in vast quantities. For those who preferred talking to reading, there were social gatherings such as the Blue Stockings Society, where intellectual women and their invited guests indulged in lively debates. In towns and cities, people gathered in salons and coffeehouses to discuss the new philosophy and share knowledge. Societies and centres of scientific learning sprang up and the public devoured every new discovery. Astronomers such as Halley, with his studies into comets, flourished, while observations of Venus played a major role in the study of atmospheres on distant planets. Perhaps most notable, however, was Herschel's discovery in 1781 of what he initially thought was a comet; it was, of course, the planet Uranus.

In France, Émilie du Châtelet produced her seminal translation of Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*, bringing the laws of physics to a new audience. This translation remains the standard translation in France. Châtelet's ideas also appeared in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and her own work on the fundamentals of physics became a popular text in Europe, becoming the foundation of debate between scientists.

Science provided entertainment as well, as the public flocked to watch the Electric Boy, in which a boy was suspended from the ceiling by silken cords and zapped with electricity. The lecturer



then produced metallic objects that flew through the air and attached themselves to the magnetised lad, before a lady from the audience kissed him, causing literal sparks to fly. Soon so-called electrical soirées were all the rage, allowing all levels of society to engage in science one way or another.

Art and culture rallied to the call of the Enlightenment and nowhere was this more obvious than in the work of Joseph Wright of Derby. Wright painted scientific scenes, capturing the firelit interior of an iron forge or the evocative scene of 'A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery', in which a man gives a lecture on the solar system. Wright didn't celebrate the glories of God or nobility, but instead elevated the worlds of rationalism and science.

In the Age of Enlightenment, the Neoclassical movement emerged, signalling a return to the Classical style and a rejection of the opulent Rococo period that had gone before. This was particularly evident in architecture, where the geometrical balance and clean lines of Ancient Greece and Rome began to appear in London and Paris, inspired by the 16th-century architect, Andreas Palladio. Palladian architecture used engineering, mathematics and geometry to create harmonious and beautiful works of stone and marble, in towering columns and breathtaking ornamental domes.

One of the most impressive and enduring examples of Enlightenment values and culture meeting is the British Museum, which opened in 1759. This Enlightenment institution was intended to allow everyone to experience knowledge, and its Classical exterior was befitting of a temple rationality. Contents, building and philosophy were in perfect harmony.

Today, the legacy of the Enlightenment is apparent in many aspects of our lives. The key Enlightenment elements of liberty, equality, and the rights of the individual are central to modern democracy; in fact, they are often taken for granted. Freedom of the press, speech and trade are things we expect across Europe, as is democratic government without the interference of monarchs or church. This legacy, of course, is not universal, but it is the cornerstone of democratic societies, a dream of philosophers that has become a reality.

c.1760-1840

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Beginning in Britain in the 1700s, the march of machines and factories soon reached Europe, changing the way its people worked and lived beyond recognition

Written by Bee Ginger

In the late 18th century, a tide of innovation and invention swept across Britain, one that would transform it and the lands beyond its shores forever. This wave of productivity heralded an incredible surge of economic growth and development that infiltrated every aspect of life, irreversibly changing how people lived, worked and viewed the world. In time it would alter the political landscape and sow the seeds of labour movements that still influence society today.

The Industrial Revolution remains the most defining era in British history, a turning point that saw skilled craftspeople replaced by labourers operating humming machines as railways, bridges, factories and steamships opened up previously unfathomable opportunities.

But what made this all possible? While there are many reasons that the Industrial Revolution began in Britain, including its ability to draw on vast amounts of attainable coal, it was the invention of the steam engine that truly sparked it into life. The first successful iteration of this machine was developed in 1712 by Thomas Newcomen (it would later be improved by James Watt to become more efficient and cheaper to operate), providing a reliable source of power that enabled factories to expand and ships and trains to travel at faster speeds, thereby reducing costs. Coupled with the knowledge of how to turn coal into coke that could then be used to create iron, a discovery made by Abraham Darby in 1709, Britain possessed the crucial elements required to steal a march on its neighbours in the race to industrialise.

> The term 'Industrial Revolution' was popularised by economic historian Arnold Toynbee in 1881

Of all the many areas transformed by the Revolution, it was the textile industry that underwent some of the most significant changes. The advent of the spinning jenny reduced the amount of labour required to make cloth, as a single worker could control several spools simultaneously. Machines were able to process cotton and spin and weave cloth cheaper and faster than ever before, and soon demand for these products grew exponentially. Cotton accounted for over half of Britain's exports by the end of the Revolution in 1840, and it also stimulated the steam, iron, coal and transport industries, who all played a part in the production and transportation process. Yet while the rise of machines made factory owners immensely wealthy and Britain the most prosperous nation on Earth, conditions for labourers were far from ideal. Drawn to Britain's cities by the prospect of work, people poured into urban areas by their thousands. Their desperation was exploited by many factory owners, with women and children particularly vulnerable. While women were expected to toil for the same amount of hours as men for less pay, children were also tasked with operating dangerous machinery, and there are countless tales of children losing fingers or being killed when they were ordered to crawl underneath machines to clear away dirt or retrieve stray bits of cotton. Fourteen-hour days were

commonplace, with many people working six days a week. The fear of unemployment and hunger was rife, and discipline was enforced through draconian measures.

Workers could be fined for talking, leaving the room without their supervisor's permission or having dirt on their machines, and latecomers were often locked out and had their pay docked. If a child began to doze off at their station they might find themselves dunked head-first into a barrel of water to wake them up.

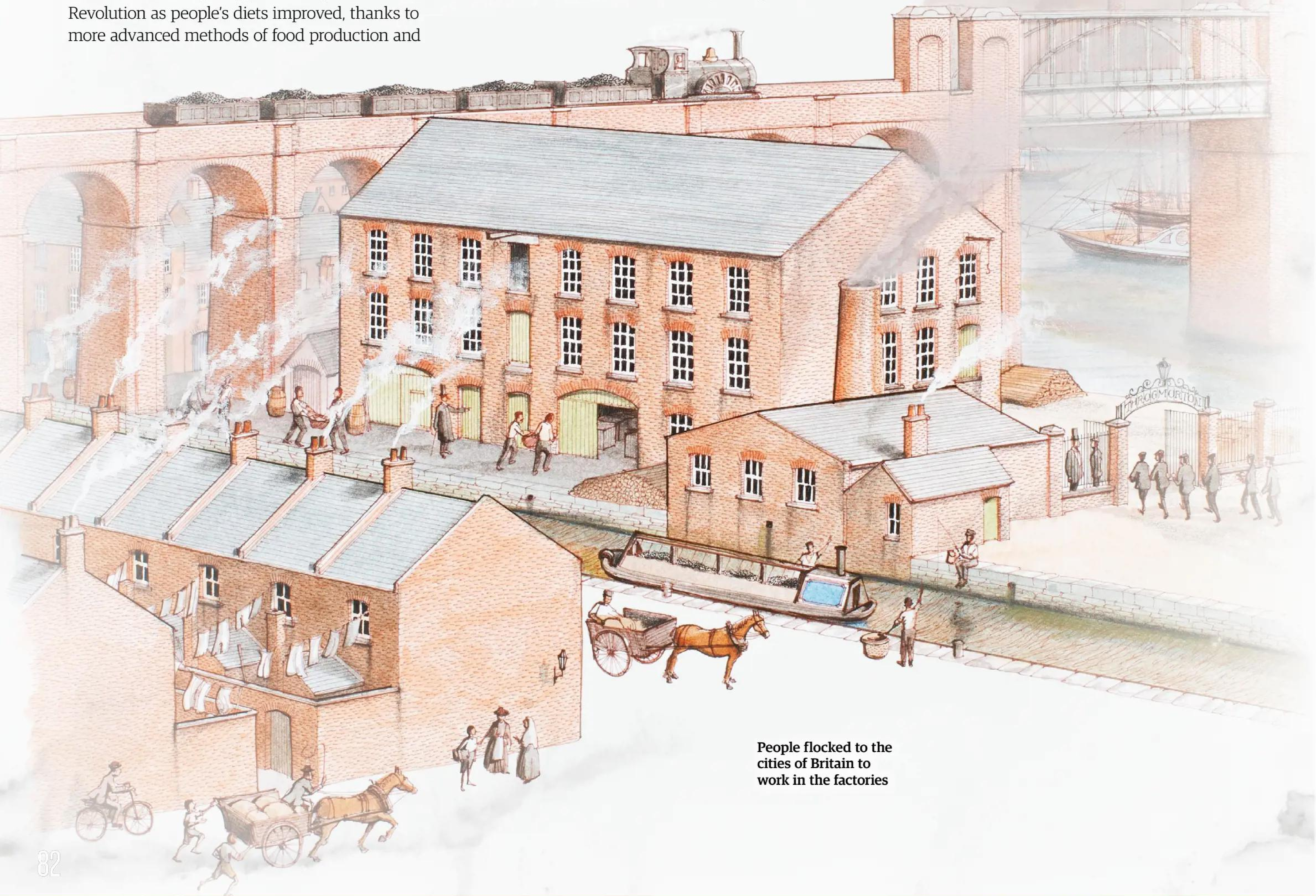
All of these workers needed somewhere to live, but insufficient housing left the majority living in squalor, with as many as 16 people crammed into a room with access to a single privy and little else in the way of sanitation or ventilation. Gutters overflowed with sewage and there was no clean water, which left families and workers vulnerable to diseases and infections. Many suffered from malnutrition, their skin pale and leaden. On top of all this, they had to contend with air pollution caused by the smoke belched out of factory chimneys and the deafening noise of the machinery they operated, which caused serious respiratory issues and hearing problems.

However, despite these terrible conditions, death rates actually dropped during the Industrial Revolution as people's diets improved, thanks to more advanced methods of food production and the gradual spread of affordable wages. This led to people living longer and an explosion in the overall population, with some estimates suggesting that the population of England doubled between 1750 and 1850. Improvements to education were another benefit of the Revolution. Equipped with the profits created by the spread of machinery, governments at the time were better able to fund mass education, extending the length of time children spent in schools. In 1833, the British Government ruled that all children working in factories should receive at least two hours of education a day. Technological breakthroughs such as the steam and rotary press helped to disseminate educational texts, and a growing demand for workers who could read, write and count continued a drive to enhance teaching methods and more diligently measure pupils' progress. Women, too, started to receive a more structured education, and by the end of the 19th century the literacy rate in the country had skyrocketed to 97 per cent.

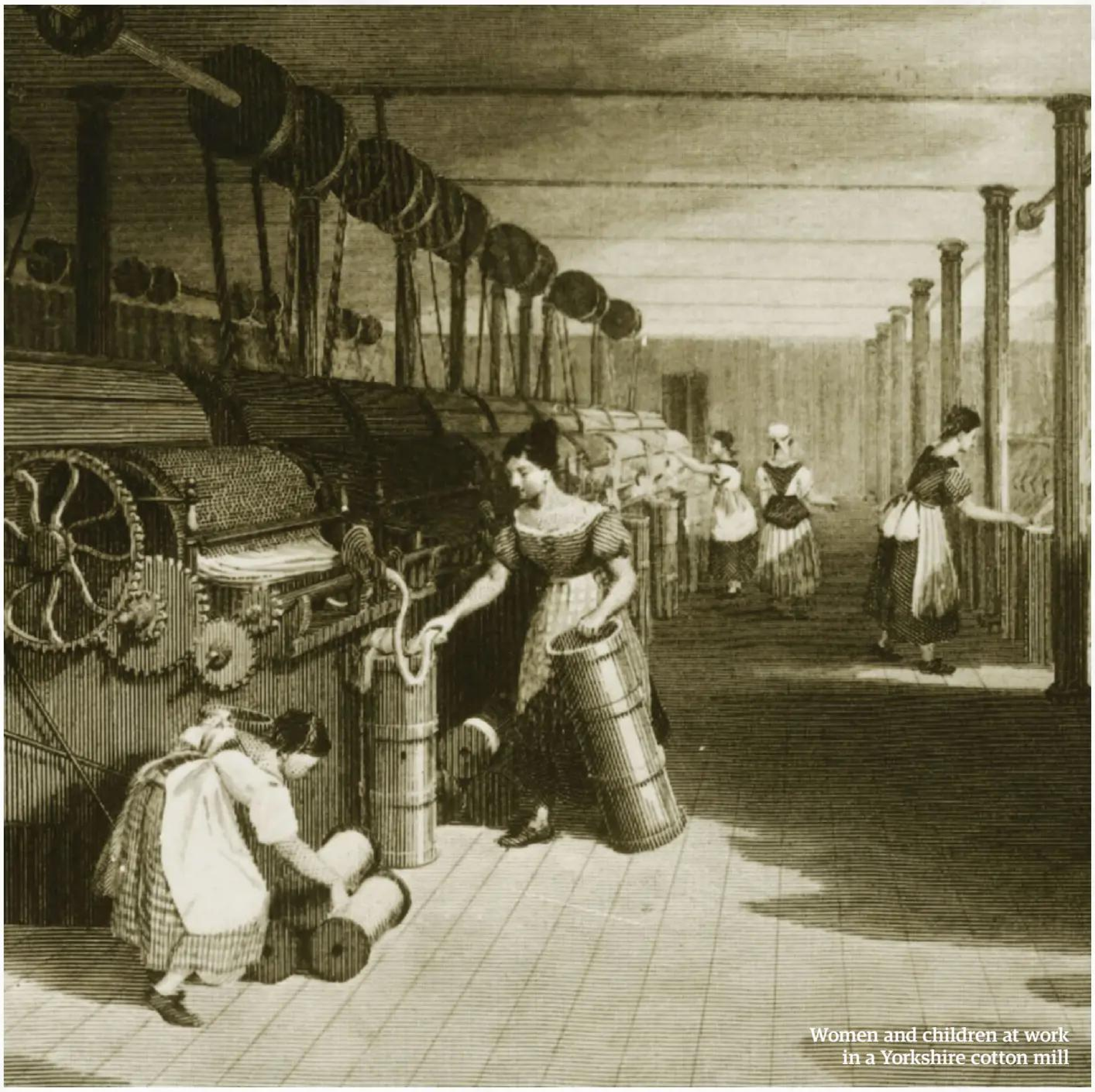
Outside of the confines of cities such as London and Manchester, railway lines and bridges were beginning to connect the country, and few men did more to enhance transportation in Britain than Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The brain behind the Great Western Railway (completed in 1841), the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the SS Great Eastern (the largest vessel built in the 19th century), Brunel's remarkable engineering helped to pave the way for the cheaper, faster and more efficient transportation of people and goods. He also oversaw the construction and development of several dockyards, and it would be from one of Britain's ports that the Industrial Revolution would spread to mainland Europe.

As Britain continued to industrialise at pace, by the early 19th century many of the European states were still predominantly agrarian, meaning that their economies were reliant on the production of crops and the tending of farmland. However, some European nations were ripe for industrialisation, and the first to realise its potential was Belgium.

Born in Lancashire in 1759, William Cockerill grew into a successful inventor and entrepreneur. In 1799, he packed up and moved to Belgium with his wife and four children, where he later established a machine-building factory in the city of Liege. The methods he introduced soon spread across the country, enabling Belgium to begin industrialisation



People flocked to the cities of Britain to work in the factories



Women and children at work in a Yorkshire cotton mill

way before larger neighbours such as France (which began to industrialise in the 1840s but not at the same speed) and Germany. As was the case with Britain, Belgium could draw on plentiful supplies of coal and iron ore, not to mention a strong tradition of textile manufacturing that was only bolstered by the techniques brought over by men such as Cockerill.

Switzerland, too, was early to join the wave of development but lacked the necessary raw materials Britain had. Instead, it focused on clock making, cotton processing, silk weaving and engineering. Unlike Britain, which enforced strict patent laws and jealously guarded its industrial secrets by punishing those it deemed guilty of industrial espionage, Switzerland adopted a relaxed attitude to industrialisation that helped businesses to flourish. Southern Europe, including Spain, Greece and the Balkans, lagged further behind when it came to harnessing the power of steam and steel, remaining focused on expanding their exportation of agrarian products and raw materials. But they were not without their own advancements. Royal textile factories sprang up in larger cities like Barcelona, where the Bonaplata Factory became the first in the country to use a steam engine, which had been imported along with other foreign machinery.

The effects of industrialisation reshaped the rest of Europe just as it had Britain, with smokey cities and whirring machines replacing the smaller settlements and many of the skilled workers that had sustained it for centuries. Yet while this physical transformation was certainly breathtaking, arguably it was the societal changes that were even more noticeable, for the Revolution didn't just create new wealth - it also created new classes of people.

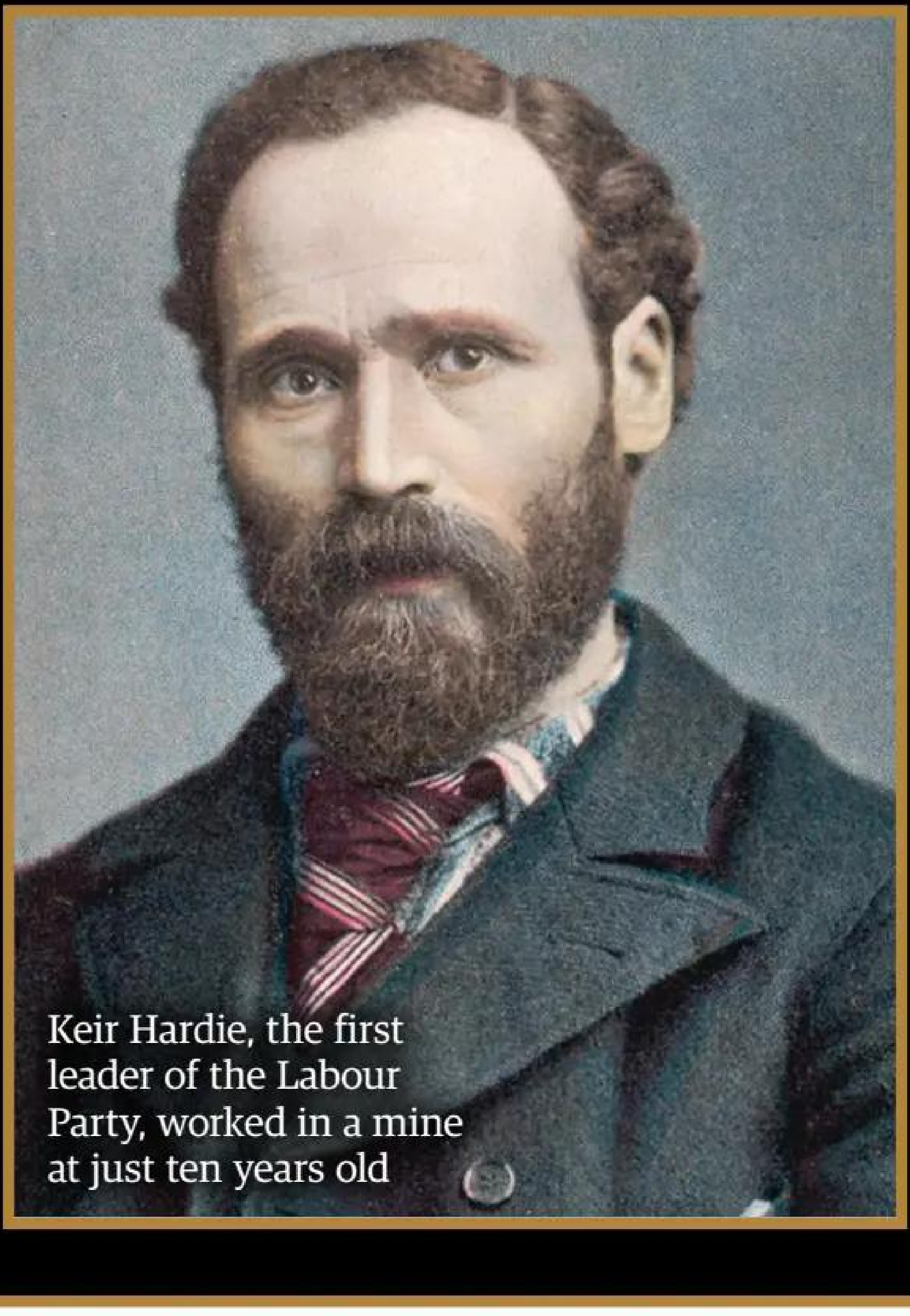
A prosperous middle class of factory, mill and mine owners now presided over a vast working class that it relied upon to continue the rapacious search for new materials, new methods and ultimately new money. The balance of power shifted as the rich sought to make inroads into government while the less fortunate were left to toil without any political recourse.

But the masses, aware of how important their labour was, knew where the real power lay. Through the foundation of unions and the threat of industrial action, they gradually began to wrest new rights and improved working conditions from their supposed superiors. Among those aggrieved by the social injustices fostered by the Industrial Revolution was a German philosopher named Karl Marx, whose communist ideology would pave the way for a very different kind of revolution.

THE FIGHT FOR CHANGE

Overworked and underappreciated, labourers united to start a movement that would eventually herald massive political reforms

Despite the efforts of numerous governments to crack down on those calling for greater freedoms and rights for the working classes, trade unions began to emerge in the 18th century as labourers sought to organise themselves and improve their lot. Key demands included a 40-hour week, the right to unionise (which had been outlawed in 1800) and the right to vote. Among other requests, the Chartist movement that began in 1838 desired suffrage for all men once they reached 21, and while the movement would peter out in the 1850s, its legacy would live on. In 1864, an attempt to coordinate an international labour movement was made in London with the founding of the International Workingmen's Association. Unwilling to back down in the face of government opposition, workers in Britain, France, Germany and elsewhere repeatedly went on strike, and gradually social and political barriers were pulled down. In 1900, frustrated at the lack of progress in Britain, Keir Hardy helped to establish the Labour Party with the funding of several trade unions. Among the policies he sought to introduce was free education, pensions and the right for women to vote. The global labour movement only continued to flourish, and it is thanks to the tireless efforts of working people that many of us today enjoy conditions and rights that were once unthinkable.



Keir Hardie, the first leader of the Labour Party, worked in a mine at just ten years old

1790s

EUROPE IN UPHEAVAL

A wave of social change, emerging initially in France, threatened the monarchies that had ruled Europe for centuries

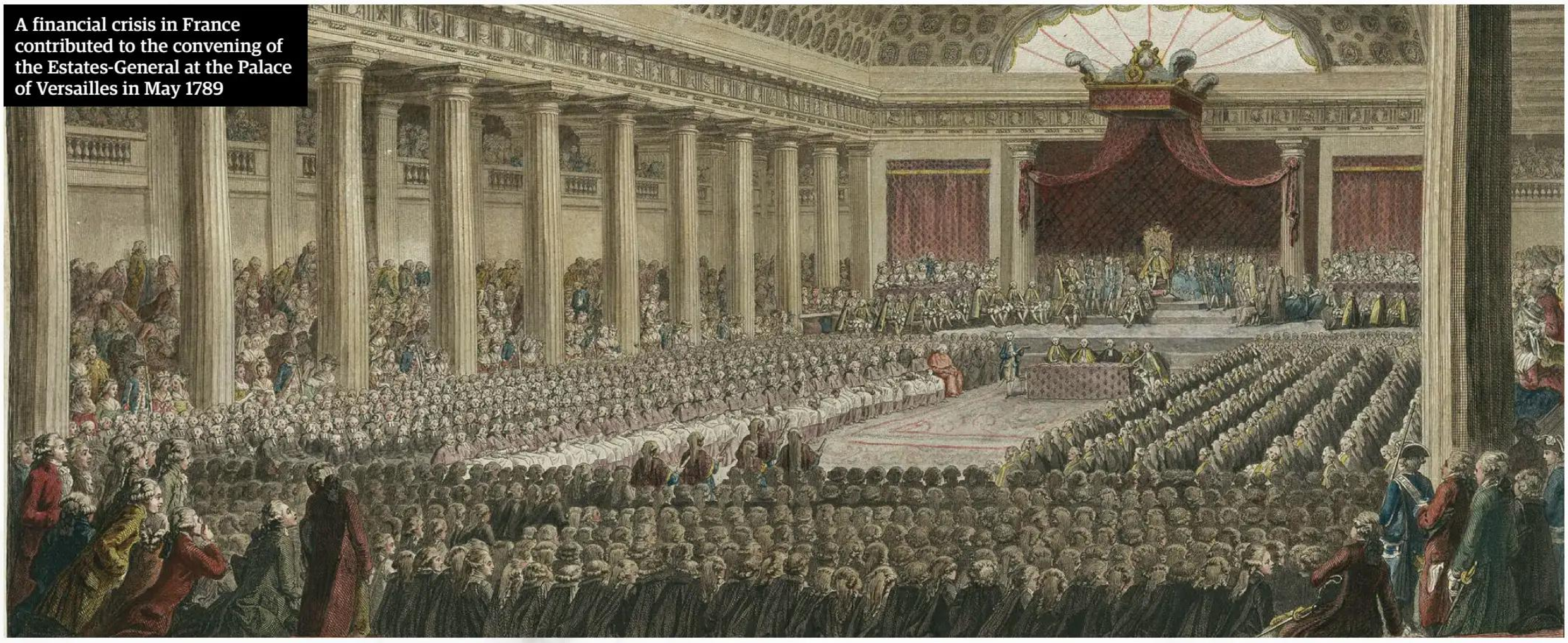
The spectre of class warfare and revolution in France alarmed the crowned heads of Europe. However, the public execution of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette made their own collective blood run cold. By the late 18th century, Europe was in turmoil. For centuries royal houses had ruled across the continent, intermarried, formed alliances, traded, built empires, and waged war against one another. Their right to rule had survived for hundreds of years, and now they clung to a rigid social structure with roots in medieval times.

The royal houses of Europe ruled through a combination of might, their own interpretation of divine authority, and often with the support of the church. Inevitably, though, the emergence of innovative political and social thought during the Enlightenment, the growing populations of subjugated classes, and the increasingly obvious excesses of the aristocratic caste, raised the discontent of the people to new levels. After all, the workers tilled the land, paid the taxes, fought the wars, and acquiesced to the power of the crown, which often appeared distant and disdainful of the common citizenry.

Nowhere were the excesses of the royals more obvious than in France, where the court of Bourbon King Louis XVI lived lavishly on the backs of the workers. Unlike Britain, where the commoners had a voice in Parliament, and the upstart republic of the United States, which the French themselves had assisted in obtaining independence, the people of France had no viable means short of demonstration to affect change. While the working classes often lived in abject poverty, the court of King Louis continued its exploitation without reform which, along with the prosecution of costly wars for empire and support of the American Revolution, spent the nation into bankruptcy, a financial oblivion that only worsened the condition of the poor.

At the same time, the latent emergence of the bourgeoisie, a middle class that was neither wealthy nor poor, began to influence the French social strata. This burgeoning middle class remained without political voice or vote; however, its control of the means of production further threatened the economic basis upon which the French monarchy perilously rested. Opposition to the French aristocracy steadily grew throughout the late 1700s, and the storm broke into open revolution in the spring of 1789.

Amid the upheaval of the revolution and the formation of the French First Republic, the European monarchies were confronted with a challenge to their centuries-old rule that might well be contagious, spreading uncontrollably across the continent. A decade of armed conflict followed as the French republic fought successive armed coalitions, giving rise to Napoleon Bonaparte, who continued the era of warfare until his ultimate defeat in 1815.



A financial crisis in France contributed to the convening of the Estates-General at the Palace of Versailles in May 1789

This iconic painting by Jacques-Louis David depicts a resolute Napoleon Bonaparte crossing the Alps during his successful campaign in Italy

> *“Nowhere were the excesses of the royals more obvious than in France, where the court of Bourbon King Louis XVI lived lavishly on the backs of the workers”*

FRANCE

Ignoring the peoples' discontent, King Louis XVI's court paid in blood during the revolution

The first Bourbon King of France, Henry IV, ascended the throne in 1589, and 200 years later the dynasty's rule came to a resounding end. King Louis XVI's reign saw a period of unprecedented financial instability and social unrest that combined to topple the French monarchy, which was officially abolished on 21 September 1792. The French Revolution had begun more than three years earlier in the spring of 1789. While it had flourished, the House of Bourbon had extended its rule to include the thrones of Spain, Sicily, Naples, and the duchy of Parma.

Economic hardship contributed greatly to the downfall of the Bourbons in France. The excessive spending of the court of Louis XVI had combined with poor harvests to cause great difficulties for farmers and the poor. In addition, the French had embarked on costly wars for empire, chiefly against Great Britain. Catastrophic defeat in the Seven Years' War had stripped France of many of its colonial possessions and added to the mountain of debt already incurred.

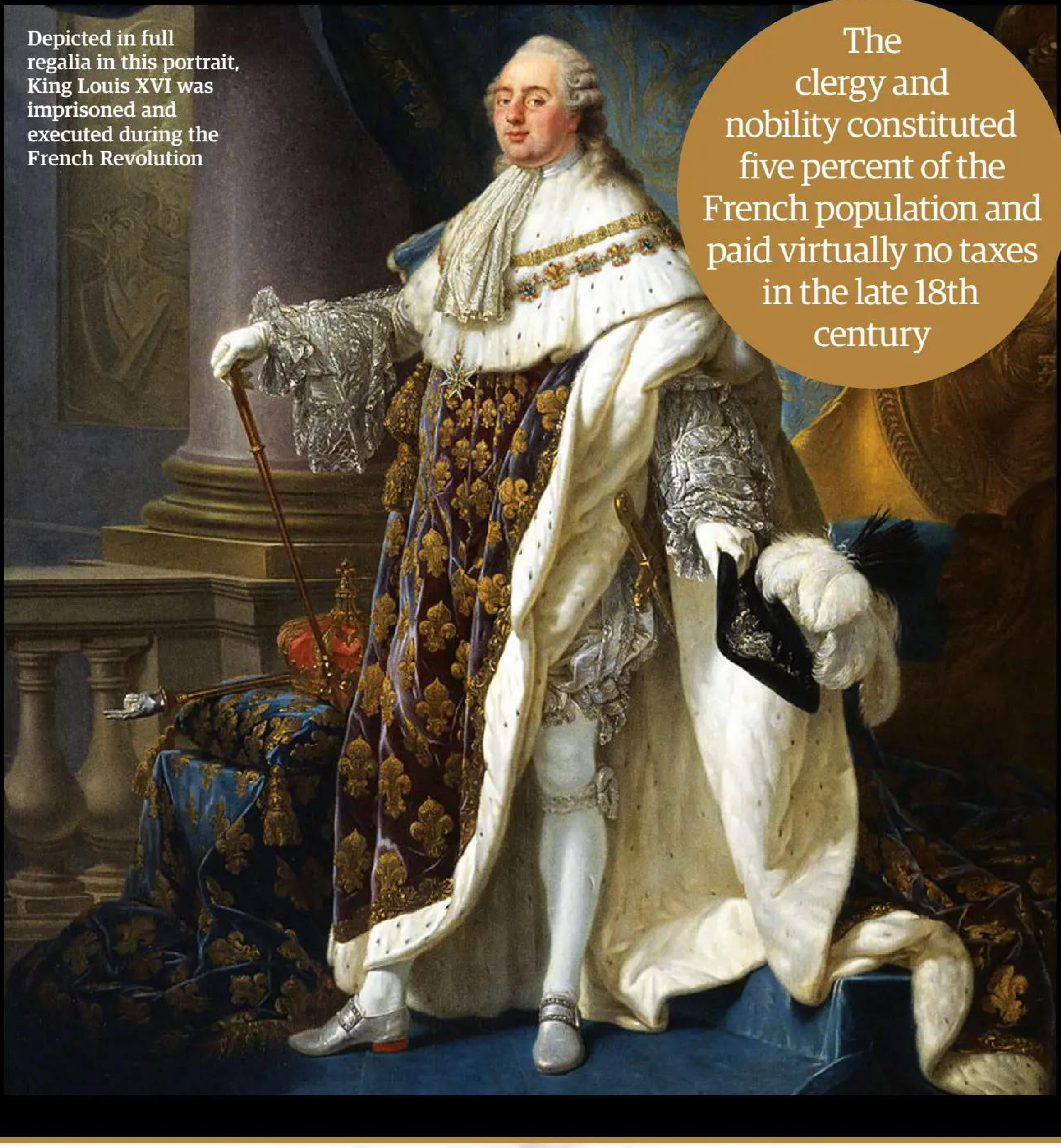
Some Frenchmen questioned their country's support for the American Revolution, which involved spending millions of francs and sending more than 10,000 soldiers along with a large portion of the French fleet to fight the British again. Despite the fact that the war was successful, France achieved little in exchange for its investment. The fact that the British had finally been defeated was of little consolation.

The overwhelming financial burden compelled Louis XVI to convene the Estates-General in the spring of 1789, and by the summer of 1790 this general assembly had forced the king to accept a constitution that limited his power and set the stage for his complete overthrow. The following spring, Louis attempted to escape the capital of Paris and join forces under the Marquis de Bouillé that were supposedly loyal to the crown at Montmedy, near the border with the Austrian Netherlands. However, he was captured at Varennes along with his queen, Marie Antoinette, and his young son, Louis, and imprisoned. The threat to the other monarchies of Europe was readily apparent, and even before the execution of Louis XVI in January 1793 and Marie Antoinette the following October a coalition of armies was moving against the French republic, which had proclaimed itself an enemy of all ruling monarchies.

On 20 April 1792, France responded to the threat of invasion from surrounding monarchies by declaring war on Austria, Prussia, and Piedmont, igniting the War of the First Coalition. Although the combined power of the coalition forces might have overwhelmed France, the alliance failed to develop a cohesive effort. After the execution of Louis and Marie Antoinette, Britain joined the war against the French republic. Following initial reverses, the French army, its ranks swelled by a general draft of able-bodied men called the levee en masse, made significant gains.

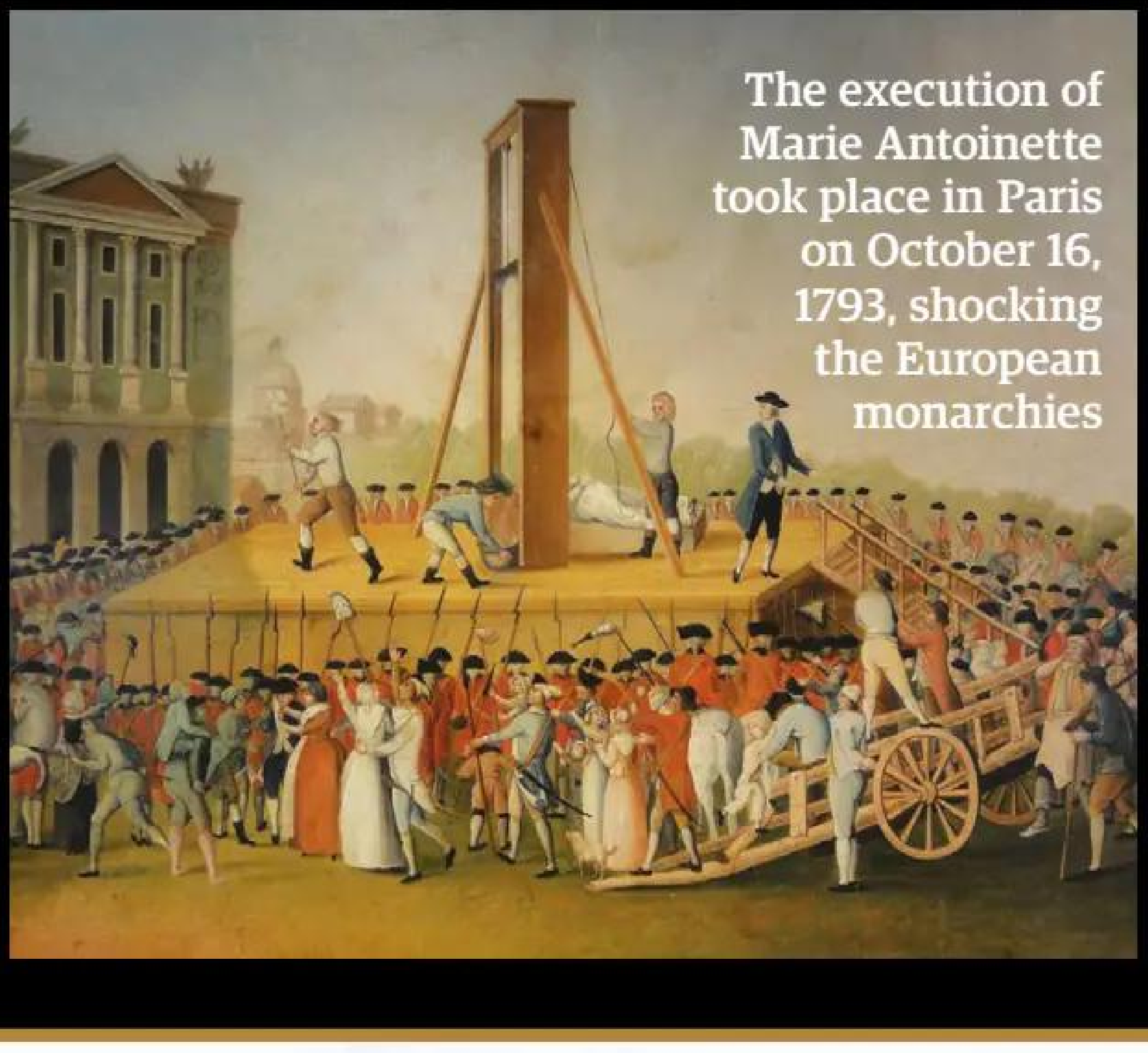
While Revolutionary France had declared war initially as a defensive measure, the conflict became an opportunity for conquest. Successes on the battlefield, significantly those of a young Napoleon Bonaparte, resulted in territorial concessions and separate peace agreements that left only Great Britain, the traditional enemy of France, at war against the First Republic.

"On April 20, 1792, France responded to the threat of invasion from surrounding monarchies by declaring war on Austria, Prussia, and Piedmont, igniting the War of the First Coalition"



Depicted in full regalia in this portrait, King Louis XVI was imprisoned and executed during the French Revolution

The clergy and nobility constituted five percent of the French population and paid virtually no taxes in the late 18th century



The execution of Marie Antoinette took place in Paris on October 16, 1793, shocking the European monarchies

GREAT BRITAIN

At the time of the French Revolution, Great Britain was the strongest economic power in Europe

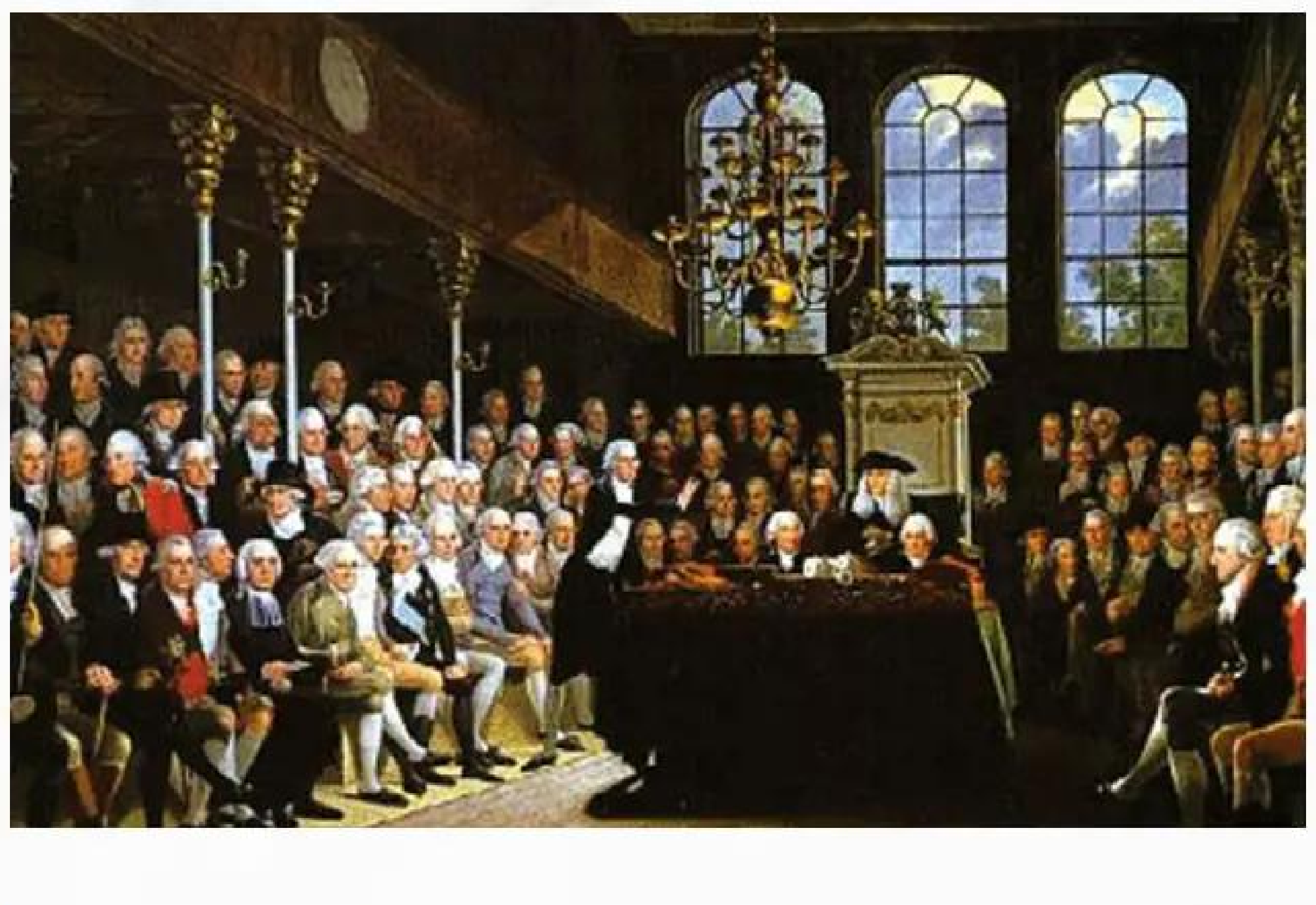
Great Britain was perhaps the most stable of European monarchies throughout the period of the French Revolution and on the eve of the Napoleonic Wars. The vast British Empire supplied wealth and stimulated commerce, while industrialisation allowed a degree of productivity that was the envy of the rest of Europe. Britain, therefore, financed much of the cost of the fight against the burgeoning French Republic and subsequently the effort to subdue Napoleon Bonaparte that culminated at Waterloo in 1815.

King George III, the third British monarch of the German House of Hanover, had come to the throne in 1760. He declared his love for Britain, spoke English as his first language, and never visited Hanover. George III opposed the excesses of the French Revolution, particularly after the execution of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. Despite the loss of much of Britain's colonial territory in North America after the American Revolution, George III remained a popular king. The French Revolution was troubling not only to the British crown, but also to the country's industrialists and prosperous landowners, who feared that the ideals of the uprising, 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité,' might carry along with them a movement for the redistribution of wealth and the means of production. They also recoiled at the apparent atrocities of the Reign of Terror with its spectacles of public execution.

Great Britain's primary military strength resided with the Royal Navy, which projected British power around the globe

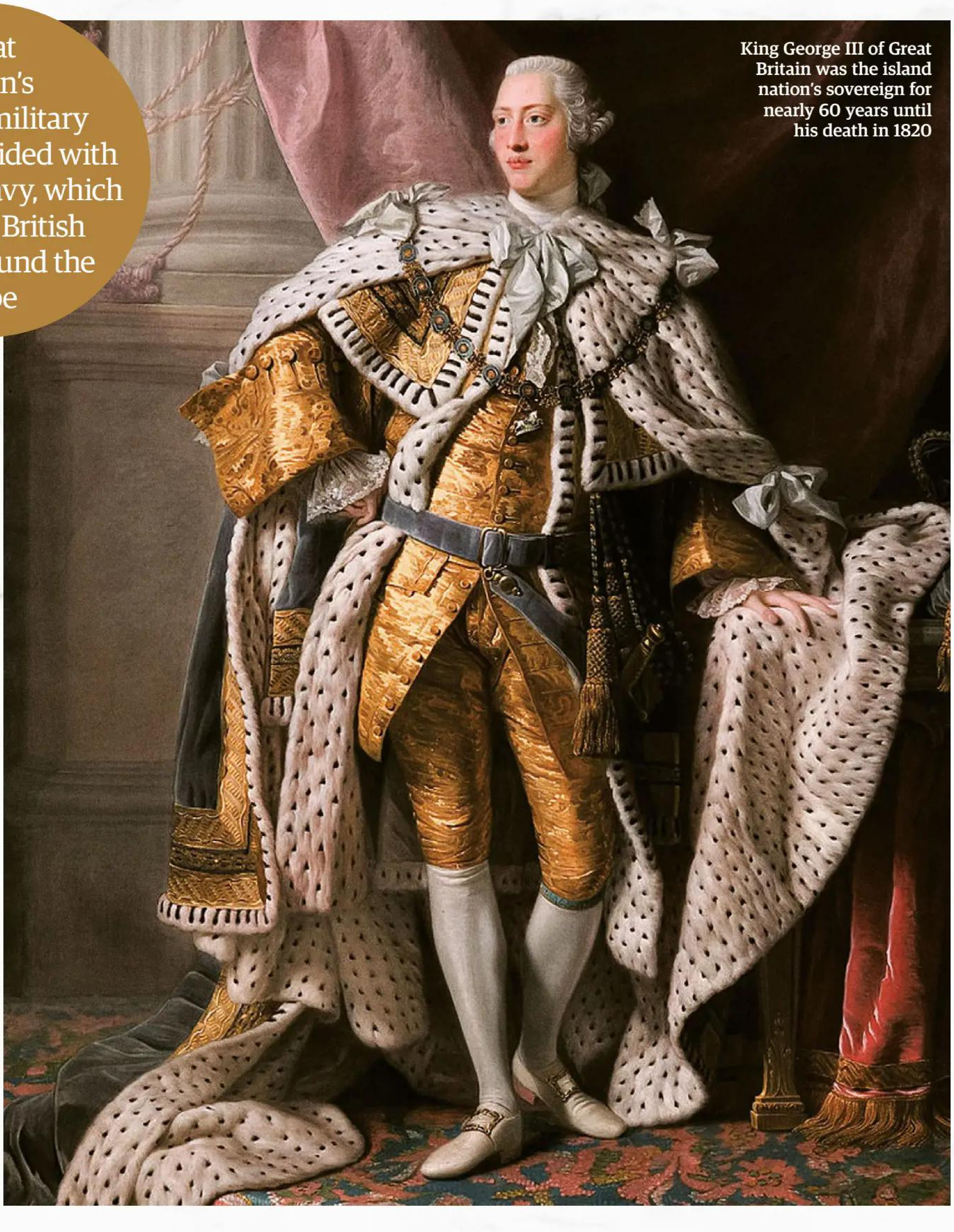
The political leader of Great Britain during the revolutionary period was Prime Minister William Pitt, also known as Pitt the Younger. A man of energy and talent, Pitt was a polarising figure who maintained an agenda of social reform that was put off with the emergence of unrest on the European continent. He financed the coalitions that sought to curb French exportation of revolutionary ideas and unrest and instituted an income tax to allay the significant expense involved, including a large monetary subsidy payment to Prussia in exchange for maintaining an army of at least 60,000 men in the field during the War of the First Coalition.

BELOW Upon the entry of Britain into the War of the First Coalition against revolutionary France, Prime Minister William Pitt addressed Parliament



While Great Britain was neutral at the outbreak of the French Revolution, the excesses of the conflict, including France's hostility to other European monarchies and its threat to invade the Netherlands, as well as the execution of the French king, compelled the British to join the First Coalition in 1793. For the next 23 years, Britain was regularly at war with Revolutionary, and then Napoleonic France, which at times threatened an invasion of Britain itself, a nightmare scenario that might well have ended in subjugation. In addition to this, the conflict between these adversaries would also mature into an ideological struggle – the liberalism of the revolution, a mantle taken up by Napoleon, battling the defenders of Britain's constitutional monarchy. While the British Royal Navy would prove to be repeatedly victorious at sea, the British army required time to develop into a force that was formidable enough to oppose Napoleon on land.

During the revolutionary period, Great Britain emerged as the implacable, principal foe of an increasingly imperialistic France. Standing alone at times, Britain remained throughout the struggle as the only major European power that never agreed to an alliance with France or signed an unfavourable treaty with the French government.



King George III of Great Britain was the island nation's sovereign for nearly 60 years until his death in 1820

PRUSSIA

Prussia initially supported the ideals of Revolutionary France but later changed its political and military course

By the late 18th century, the House of Hohenzollern had been preeminent in Prussia for nearly 300 years. Frederick William II, nephew of the famed Frederick The Great, came to the throne upon the death of his uncle in 1786. The foundation of Prussian power was the strength of its army; however, unlike his predecessors Frederick William had little interest in military affairs. He delegated responsibility for the army's training and esprit de corps to others, which later cost the nation dearly.

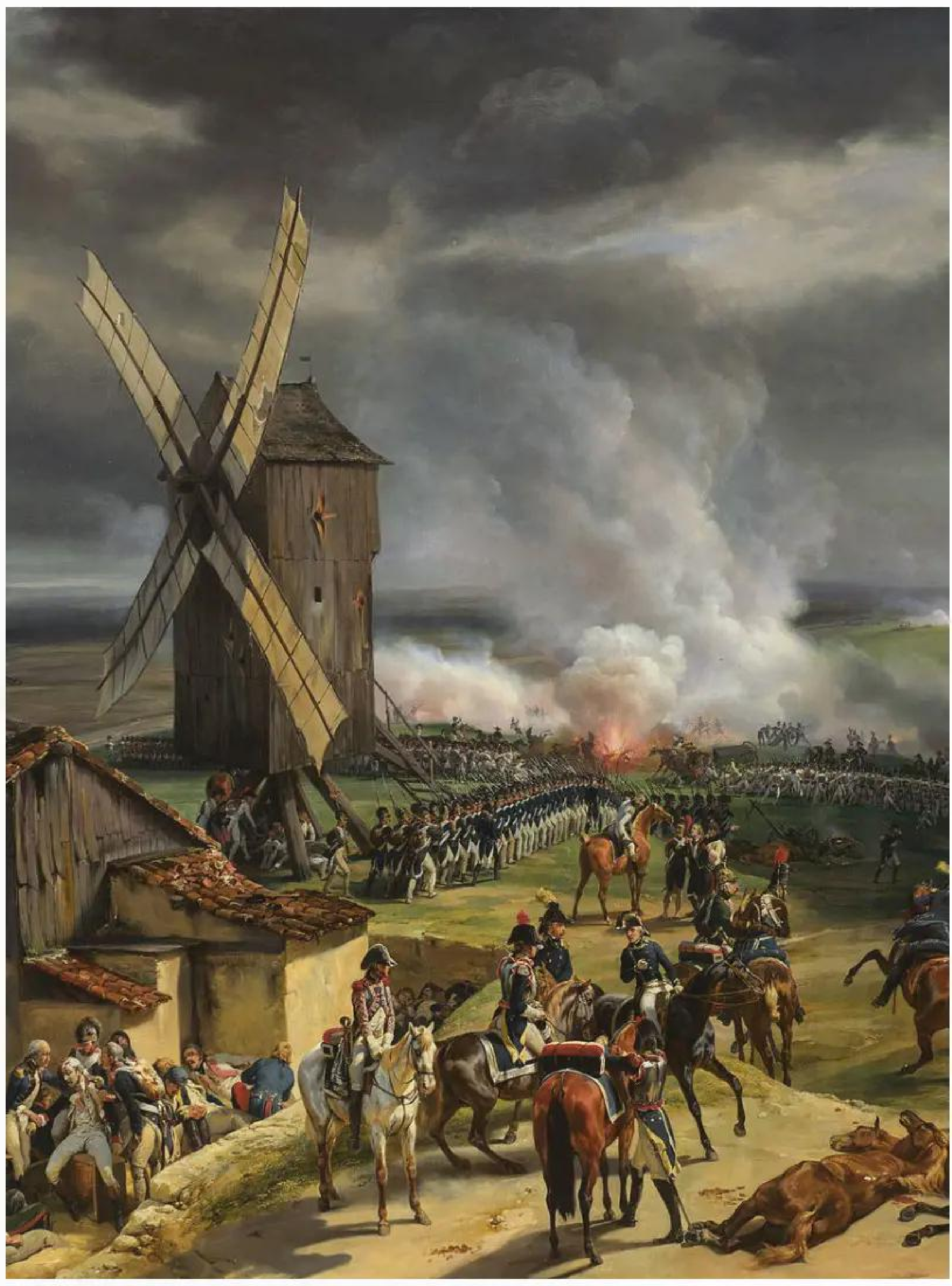
The outbreak of the French Revolution was initially welcomed by many prominent leaders in Prussia. In fact, Count Ewald Friedrich von Hertzberg, the Prussian Foreign Minister, detested the Bourbon monarchy of France as a decadent regime run by incompetent individuals. Frederick William also supported the revolution in its early stages. In addition to their enlightened perspective, the Prussians were also pragmatic. Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, was Austrian by birth, and therefore an alliance of sorts existed between the two countries. Despite their common German ancestry, Prussia and Austria had been rivals for some time. The revolution offered the opportunity to end that troubling alliance and isolate Austria.

Although their differences nearly escalated to a declaration of war on more than one occasion, Prussia and Austria reached an accord in the summer of 1790, and in its wake Frederick William abandoned efforts to pursue an alliance with revolutionary France. Instead, Prussia assumed an adversarial posture. The aging von Hertzberg was relieved of duty in favour of Johann Rudolf von Bischoffwerder, who advocated a declaration of war against France. Bischoffwerder travelled to the Austrian capital of Vienna in the summer of 1791 and negotiated the Vienna Convention, signed on 25 July, which outlined the principles of an alliance between Austria and Prussia, whose combined armies would confront Revolutionary France with a considerable threat.

After military successes in the Seven Years' War of the mid-18th century, Prussia had nearly doubled in size by the French

A month after the Vienna Convention, Frederick William and Leopold II, Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria, issued the Declaration of Pillnitz, which was neither a declaration of war nor a document that displayed any strategic initiative. Rather, the declaration was a statement of joint opposition to the French Revolution and support for King Louis XVI.

Three months after revolutionary France declared war on Austria on 20 April 1792, the Duke of Brunswick led a Prussian army that invaded France, intending to march on Paris. The Prussians met the French at Valmy and were decisively defeated. The deterioration of Prussian combat efficiency was evident, and contemporary observers were stunned with outcome of the battle. It was the first major land engagement for the French army during the revolutionary wars. After suffering further military setbacks, the Prussians made territorial concessions and signed the Peace of Basel on 5 April 1795, ending their participation in the First Coalition.



RUSSIA

Before and during the French Revolution, Russia was continually at war with its neighbours

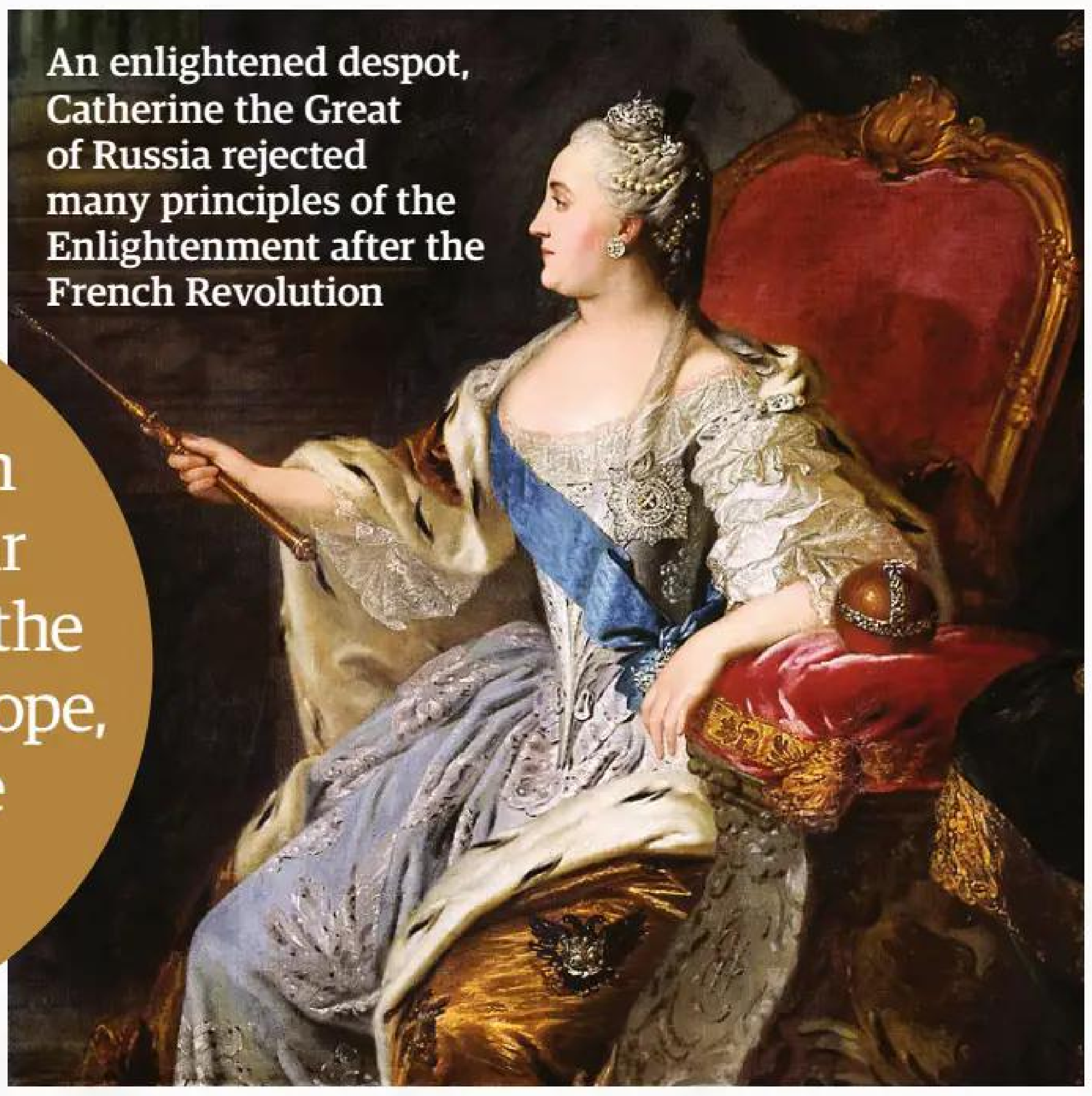
Catherine II, better known as Catherine the Great, ruled Russia from 1762 to her death in 1796. German by birth and a member of the House of Romanov by marriage, she claimed the throne of Russia following a coup d'etat during which her husband, Czar Peter III, died under mysterious circumstances. During her reign, Russian prestige grew steadily. Territorial gains were accomplished through military victories against the Ottoman Empire, the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the colonization of Alaska. She annexed the Crimea in 1783.

Although she was absolute ruler of Russia, she was also an enthusiastic supporter of the Enlightenment and was inspired by the writings of Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, one of the foremost French thinkers and authors of the period. Catherine embraced the ideals of the Enlightenment and initiated reforms in Russia that touched many aspects of society, including the law, the education of women, and the economy. In the tradition of Peter the Great, she continued to turn the empire toward the West. Remembered as an enlightened despot, Catherine the Great also was the catalyst for the Russian Enlightenment, encouraging the growth of the arts and sciences.

With the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, Russia was already embroiled in a war with Sweden, and Catherine's familiarity with the principles of the Enlightenment led her to support the revolution in the beginning. However, as the upheaval persisted she grew disenchanted with the continuing violence and class struggle. Eventually, she disavowed many of the tenets of the Enlightenment that she had previously embraced.

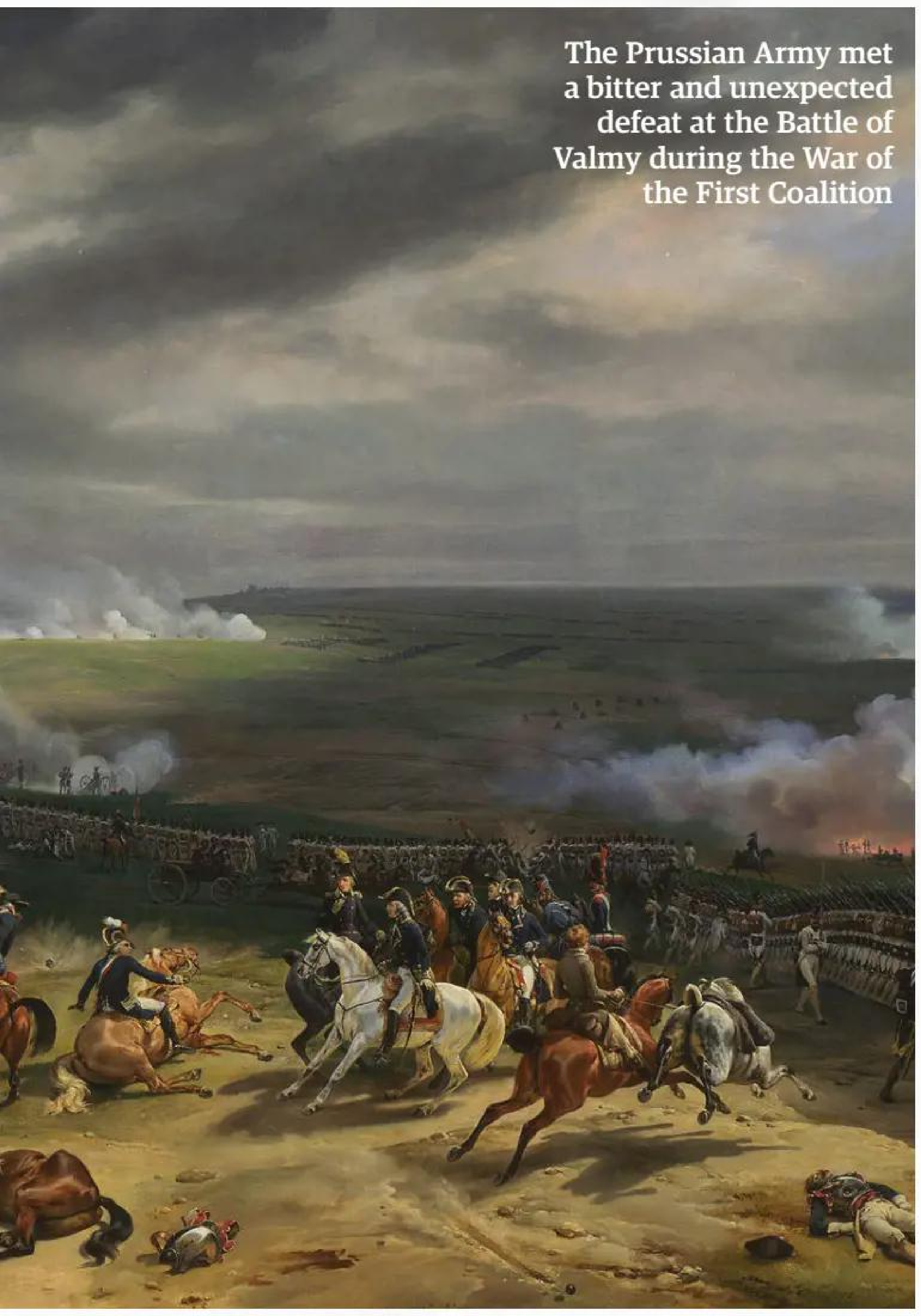
The vast Russian empire was by far the largest among the great powers of Europe, stretching to the Pacific Ocean

Russia did not participate in the War of the First Coalition, and Catherine died in 1796, prior to its end. She was somewhat estranged from her son, Paul I, and did not intend for him to inherit the Russian throne. Rather, she favoured her grandson, Alexander, and when she died suddenly of a stroke she had already prepared instructions that her son was not to succeed her. It is said that Alexander was aware of the document that would have made him Tsar of Russia, but he dared not disclose its existence.



An enlightened despot, Catherine the Great of Russia rejected many principles of the Enlightenment after the French Revolution

In 1798, Russia joined Great Britain, Austria, the Ottoman Empire, and other states in the War of the Second Coalition against revolutionary France. Russian forces under the command of General Alexander Suvorov inflicted temporary setbacks on the French in Italy, while others participated with the British in a failed invasion of the Netherlands. The French decisively defeated combined Russian, Swiss, and Austrian armies at the Second Battle of Zurich in September 1799. Russia



The Prussian Army met a bitter and unexpected defeat at the Battle of Valmy during the War of the First Coalition

Frederick William II died in the autumn of 1797 and was succeeded by his son, Frederick William III, who did not oppose France militarily again until the War of the Fourth Coalition in 1806. The results were disastrous for Prussia, which was reduced temporarily to a French vassal state.

> *"Catherine's familiarity with the principles of the Enlightenment led her to support the revolution in the beginning"*

subsequently withdrew from the Second Coalition. The reign of Paul I lasted only five years; he was assassinated on 23 March 1801, and succeeded by Catherine's original choice, his son Alexander I, who concluded an alliance with Prussia, ended a conflict with Britain, and began a diplomatic dialogue with Emperor Francis II of the Holy Roman Empire. Alexander I initially professed admiration for Napoleon and the French nation. However, he later came to believe that the French first consul was nothing more than "the most famous tyrant the world has produced."

AUSTRIA

Staunchly conservative, the Austrian monarchy opposed the French Revolution and set out to crush it

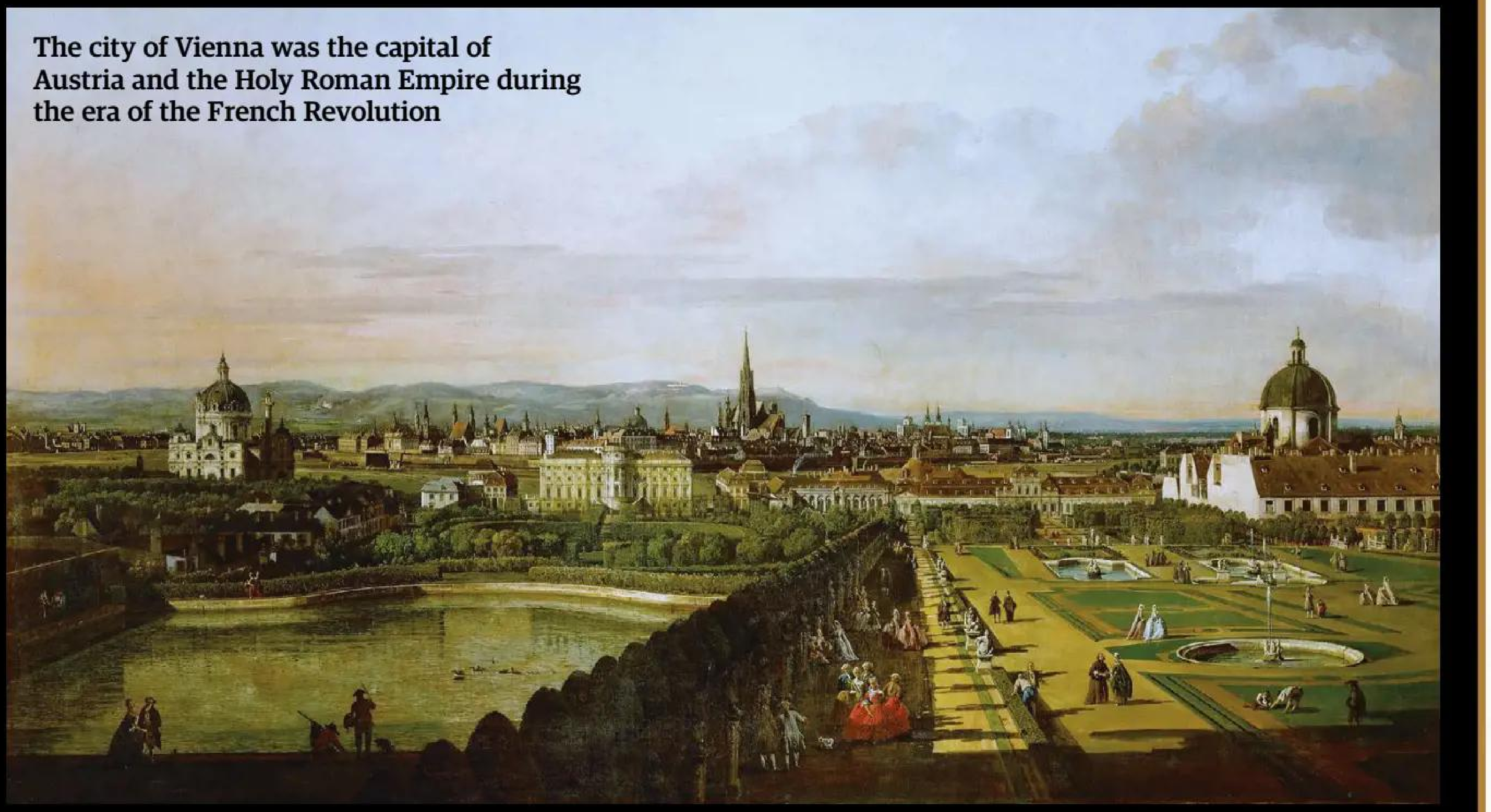
The first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire was Charlemagne, crowned in the year 800. The last was Francis II of Austria, who abdicated after his army's crushing defeat by Napoleon's French Army at the Battle of Austerlitz in 1806. Even though the empire was dissolved, Austria remained a strident opponent of Napoleonic France.

Prior to its disastrous defeat in the War of the Third Coalition, Austria was a principal opponent of revolutionary France. The House of Habsburg, and its successor Habsburg-Lorraine, had ruled in Austria and the Holy Roman Empire since 1438, and by the time of the revolution the monarchy was firmly and conservatively entrenched. Marie Antoinette, the Archduchess of Austria and aunt of Francis II, married King Louis XVI of France in April 1770, forming a political alliance between the Habsburg and Bourbon houses. She was publicly guillotined by the revolutionaries on 16 October 1793, in the Place de la Revolution in Paris. Her execution enraged Austrian leaders, and the open contempt that the French radicals expressed for all European monarchies was a direct threat to the stability of the Austrian crown. That threat was increasingly alarming as the French armies of the First Republic gained the upper hand during the War of the First Coalition.

After settling its differences with Germanic rival Prussia, Emperor Leopold II, Francis' father and the brother of Marie Antoinette, had joined his counterpart, Prussian King Frederick William II in issuing the Declaration of Pillnitz. The declaration called upon other powers of Europe to intervene if the life of Louis XVI was threatened but also contained the caveat that Austria would not go to war unless other European nations did so as well. On 1 March 1792, just days before revolutionary France declared war on Austria, Leopold II died, and Francis II ascended the Habsburg throne. Francis was supposedly indifferent to the fate of Marie Antoinette, having little recollection of his aunt and allowing negotiations for her release from prison to fizzle when he was unwilling to make any concessions to the French.

Francis personally led the Austrian Army for a time during the War of the First Coalition, but the French overcame early setbacks to seize the initiative and drive beyond their own borders, forcing the allied Prussians and Austrians back. Napoleon's successful campaign in Italy brought the Habsburg regime to the negotiating table, and the Treaty of Campo Formio, signed on 18 October 1797, ended the War of the First Coalition, as Britain was the only coalition partner still at war with revolutionary France. Just five months after the signing of the treaty, however, France was again at war with a coalition, this time including Austria, Britain, Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Portugal, Naples, and others. The Second Coalition achieved some early victories, but in the end was no more successful than its predecessor. Napoleon and the Consulate had assumed power in France by late 1799, and Russia pulled out of the fractious alliance. France gained new territories with the signing of the Treaty of Luneville in 1801, and the Second Coalition faded away. Austria remained periodically at war with revolutionary and Napoleonic France for the next 14 years.

> Austria was a component of the Holy Roman Empire, which dated to the Middle Ages, until its dissolution in 1806



The city of Vienna was the capital of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire during the era of the French Revolution

1804-1815, 1852-1870

THE FRENCH EMPIRE

Inspired by the great empires of Alexander the Great and Charlemagne, the young Napoleon Bonaparte had an absolute belief that it was his destiny to lead the fledgling French Republic to greatness

Written by Melanie Clegg

From the first moment that the young general Napoleon Bonaparte seized power and became First Consul in 1799, it was clear that he had ambitions not just to extend French territories, but to create a great empire that would rival those forged by his military heroes Alexander the Great, Charlemagne and Julius Caesar. Meanwhile, widespread opposition elsewhere in Europe to the republican values espoused by the French Revolution had led to France going to war against several neighbouring nations, including Britain and Austria. What started as modest territorial gains would eventually, by the end of the century, become a deliberate policy to extend French territory and in the process spread the ideologies of the revolution itself.

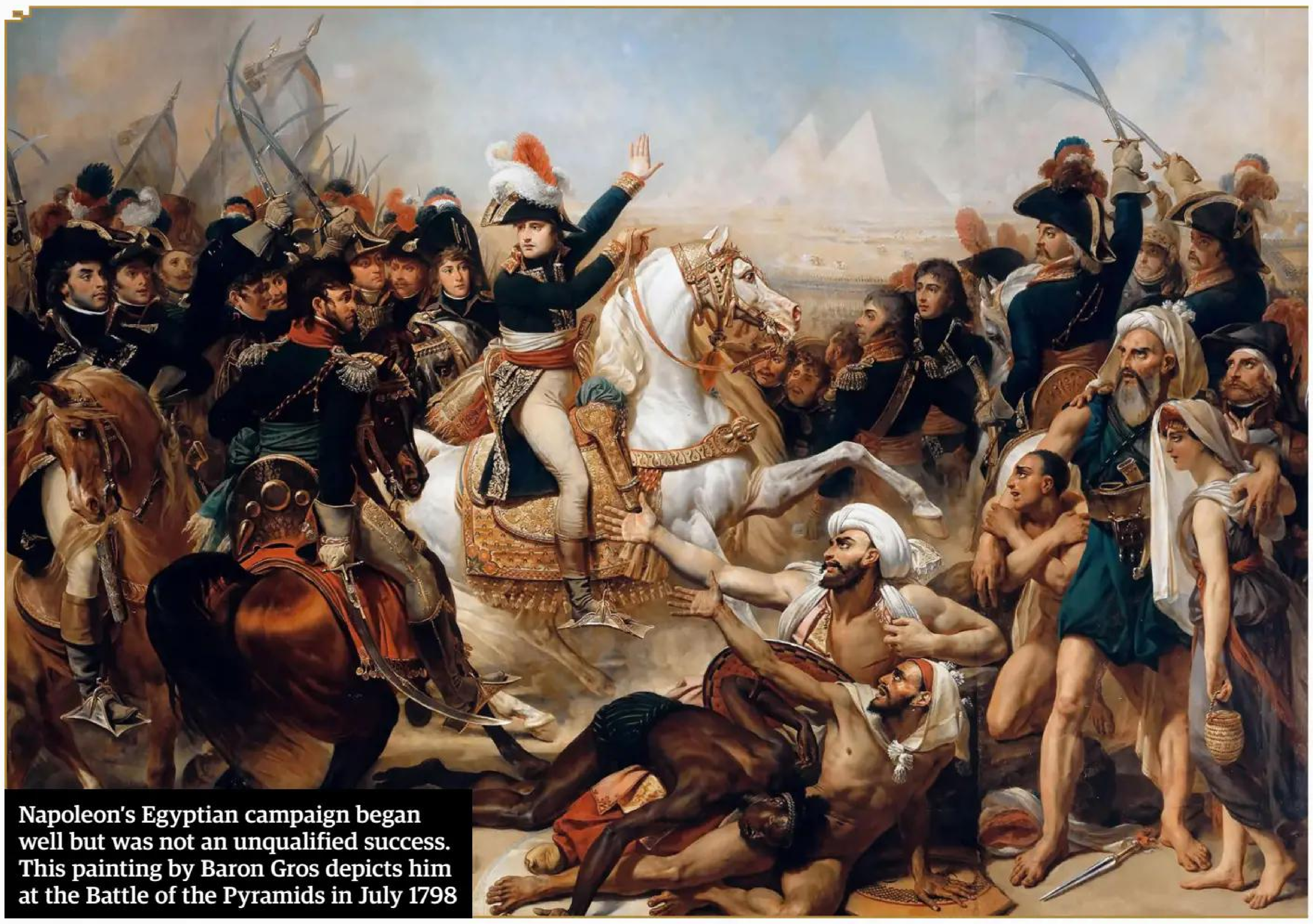
For Napoleon, who believed himself to be the saviour of the French people and the natural successor – and perhaps even reincarnation – of the great Frankish ruler and Holy Roman emperor Charlemagne, it seemed entirely fitting that the violent upheaval and unrest of the French Revolution, which had freed the people from bonds that had enslaved them for centuries, should also be the catalyst for a golden age of conquest and prosperity for France.

Napoleon's first successes were as commander of the Army of Italy, which was notoriously undisciplined, poorly organised and unsuccessful until his arrival. Under Napoleon's command, the army enjoyed notable success against the Italian and Austrian armies, which had formed a coalition against the French, capturing Italian territory, including Piedmont and Mantua, along the way. Spurred on by his astonishing successes in Italy, Napoleon was confident of further victories when he led his troops even further afield to Egypt and Syria, accompanied by a band of artists, historians and archaeologists. However, although the campaign was initially very successful, a series of defeats – most notably against the British who were defending their own colonial interests in north Africa – meant that Napoleon's army was ultimately forced to withdraw and return to France.

Although the Egyptian campaign had not been an unqualified success, it had enormously raised Napoleon's profile both in France and overseas, bringing him one step closer to the absolute power that he already craved. And although his clash with the colonial ambitions of the British had ultimately ended in disaster, it had widened the scope of his vision to encompass the possibility of creating a new colonial empire for the French that would be even greater than that overseen by Great Britain. His own personal dislike and mistrust of the British, whom he believed to be the absolute antithesis of the newly liberated, modern and energetic republican French, was a significant factor in Napoleon's plans to extend French territory, increase their colonial influence and unify the European mainland. For Napoleon, the invasion and conquest of other countries was not a hostile act but one of liberation, as it would bring the pure ideologies of the French Revolution to the rest of Europe.

Over the next few years, Napoleon and his forces continued to advance into Italy. They seized vast amounts of territory including Genoa, Naples and Tuscany as they went and created a new Italian Republic with Milan, which the French had tried and ultimately failed to seize control of during the Italian Wars several centuries earlier, at the very heart of this new French outpost. At the same time, French troops were pushing into Germany and the Netherlands, seizing a significant amount of territory – all of which went a long way towards reinforcing Napoleon's position as de facto and then actual ruler of France, which was confirmed when he was crowned emperor by the pope in 1804.

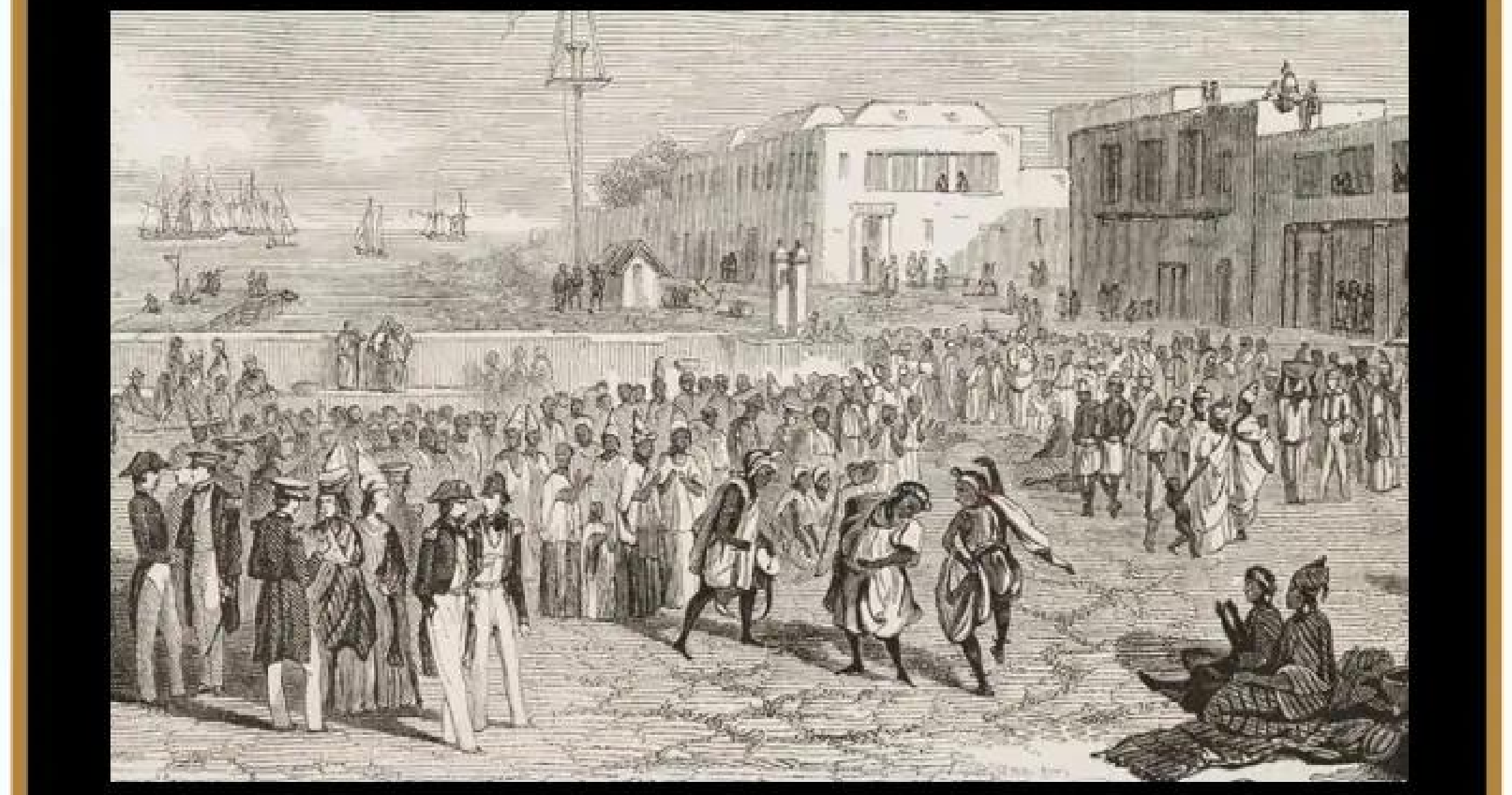
Images: Getty Images, Alamy



Napoleon's Egyptian campaign began well but was not an unqualified success. This painting by Baron Gros depicts him at the Battle of the Pyramids in July 1798

THE FRENCH COLONIAL EMPIRE

Although French colonial acquisitions had been steadily increasing since the 16th century, they peaked and indeed doubled during the reign of Napoleon III



An engraving of local people dancing in the square on the island of Gorée during an official French visit to Senegal

While Napoleon I had concentrated the majority of his efforts on extending his territory across continental Europe, his nephew Napoleon III took a great personal interest in the development and expansion of France's colonial territories, which he saw as the key to increasing France's wealth and prestige across the globe. The French already owned significant amounts of land by the middle of the 19th century and these holdings would more than double under the auspices of Napoleon III, who had grand visions of expanding into Asia as well as further into Africa. Although attempts to gain footholds in Korea and Japan were doomed to failure, Napoleon III had many notable successes, aided by his bold new Ministry of the Navy and the Colonies. This oversaw a complete overhaul of the French navy and dealt with the administration of the French colonies, such as the takeover of New Caledonia in Canada in 1853, the colonisation of Senegal in 1854, the sending of a joint Franco-British expeditionary force into China in the late 1850s, the takeover of significant territories in Vietnam and Cambodia and an increased military presence in Algeria, which had been under French rule since 1830 but only now was brought entirely to heel.

"The ignominious retreat from Russia was followed by a gradual dwindling of France's territorial gains"

Napoleon's efforts to extend French rule would continue for the next decade, with significant success – when the French Empire was at its peak in 1812, it ruled over an astonishing 70 million people, who lived in 130 departments all over mainland Europe and comprising Spain, Italy, Germany and large swathes of the Netherlands and Poland. Inspired by the Roman model, Napoleon actually took a paternal interest in the countries that his empire absorbed. He introduced his own civil code, known as the Napoleonic code, which was designed to make life fairer and more egalitarian for all of his citizens, including women and children, and abolished the aristocratic privileges that had, he believed, been holding Europe back from true progress and enlightenment.

Furthermore, although he maintained strict control of all territory, he developed a policy of placing his own family members into positions of power and influence in these newly conquered lands, often replacing the hereditary monarchs that had he deposed or marrying close family members into the royal families of allies in order to strengthen the bonds between them. Although Napoleon, who regarded himself as a self-made man driven by his own ambition and sense of destiny, had no great love for the old ruling Houses and aristocracy of Europe, he nonetheless understood that people needed figureheads. He also saw this as an opportunity to increase the prestige and grandeur of his own family and, by extension, himself, by setting his sisters and brothers up in their own magnificent courts across Europe, where they would exist as highly visible proof of French might.

However, this advancement of the rapacious and not entirely loyal Bonaparte family would be a part of his undoing – there had been everything to play for when he remained childless, but as soon as his second wife, Marie Louise of Austria, had his much-longed-for son and heir to his vast dominions, cracks quickly began to appear in the Bonaparte faction. At the same time, the French people, initially so supportive of Napoleon's military expeditions, were rapidly losing enthusiasm for the cost, both financial and human (especially after the 1812 Russian campaign, during which an estimated half a million French soldiers lost their lives in just over five months), of their ruler's territorial and dynastic ambitions.

The terrible failure of the Russian campaign was to prove a significant turning point in Napoleon's career as it catastrophically weakened his forces and also his prestige at home and abroad, leading Prussia and Austria to break their alliances with the French and throw in their lot with the British. The ignominious retreat from Russia was followed by a gradual dwindling of France's territorial gains over the last decade, losing Germany, Spain and the Netherlands and being pushed back beyond their own borders until finally Napoleon was forced to abdicate in 1814. His brief return to power a year later came to a decisive and final end a year later at Waterloo, which also marked the final death throes of the glorious empire that he had worked so hard to create.

When Napoleon died a sad and lonely exile in May 1821, it initially seemed as though the grand dynastic ambitions of the Bonaparte family had died with him. His surviving siblings were obviously keen to distance themselves from him, while his sole legitimate male heir, the son that he had had such high hopes for, was effectively a prisoner of his Austrian relatives in Vienna. No one could have predicted that just over 30 years after Napoleon drew his last breath, another Bonaparte emperor would be sitting on the French throne. Napoleon III was the son of Napoleon's stepdaughter Hortense de Beauharnais and his elder brother Louis Bonaparte, a union that had been arranged by Empress Joséphine in order to secure her own position at Napoleon's side when it became clear that she would be unable to give him an heir. Napoleon III had bided his time in exile until the moment came for him to return to France and seize power, first as president from 1848 and then as emperor from 1852.

Crucially, unlike his uncle, Napoleon III had spent a great deal of time in the united Kingdom and had built a warm relationship with the establishment there. The British government was no doubt greatly reassured by his public proclamation that for him "the empire means peace", and that he had no desire to emulate his war-mongering uncle. However, peaceable though he may have seemed, Napoleon III was no pushover and he was still extremely ambitious for the French people.

Like his uncle, Napoleon III was keen to greatly enhance the prestige and international influence both of himself and France, but he did so by employing skillful diplomacy and making friends rather than enemies. In this he achieved notable success – particularly with regards to the British. The friendship between the two nations was sealed by their alliance against Russia during the Crimean War, which did much to reinforce Napoleon III's position as a major player on the international stage.

Emboldened by the success of this venture, Napoleon III then followed in his uncle's footsteps and turned his attention towards the Italian peninsula, forging a deal with King Victor Emmanuel of Piedmont-Sardinia wherein he would be given Nice and Savoy in exchange for his assistance in liberating the country from the Austrian Empire. The ensuing war dragged on for several years but ultimately resulted in a victory for France and a welcome increase to their territory.

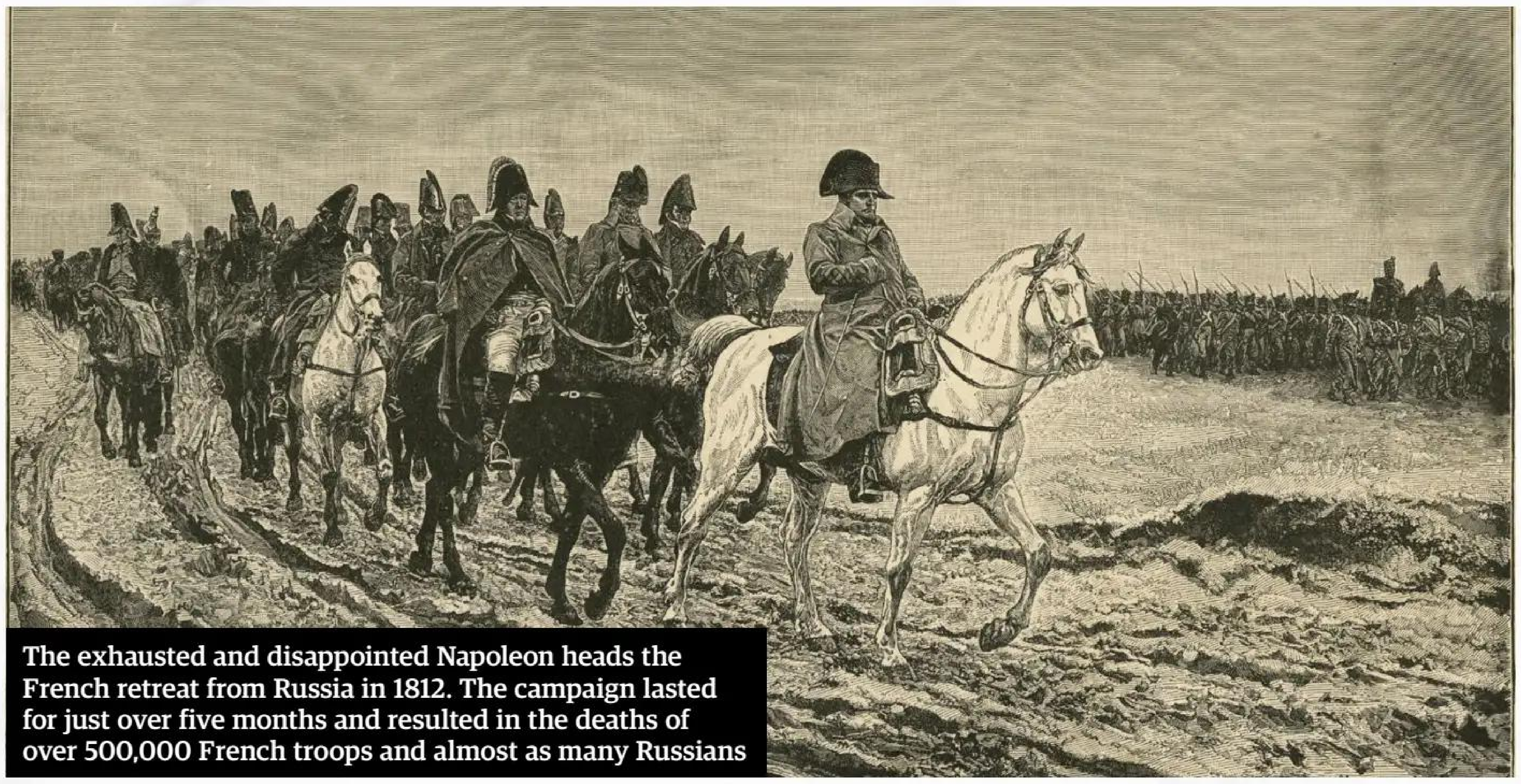
However, although it ended well, the war cost Napoleon III a great deal of his support at home in France, thanks in part to his meddling in the powers of the papacy. He thenceforth concentrated his efforts on emulating the British and building up the French colonial assets in South America, Africa and Asia, most notably in China and Cambodia. Despite some setbacks along the way – such as when attempts to gain a foothold in Japan and Korea came to nothing – he was so successful in doing so that he more than doubled the size of the French colonial empire during his reign.

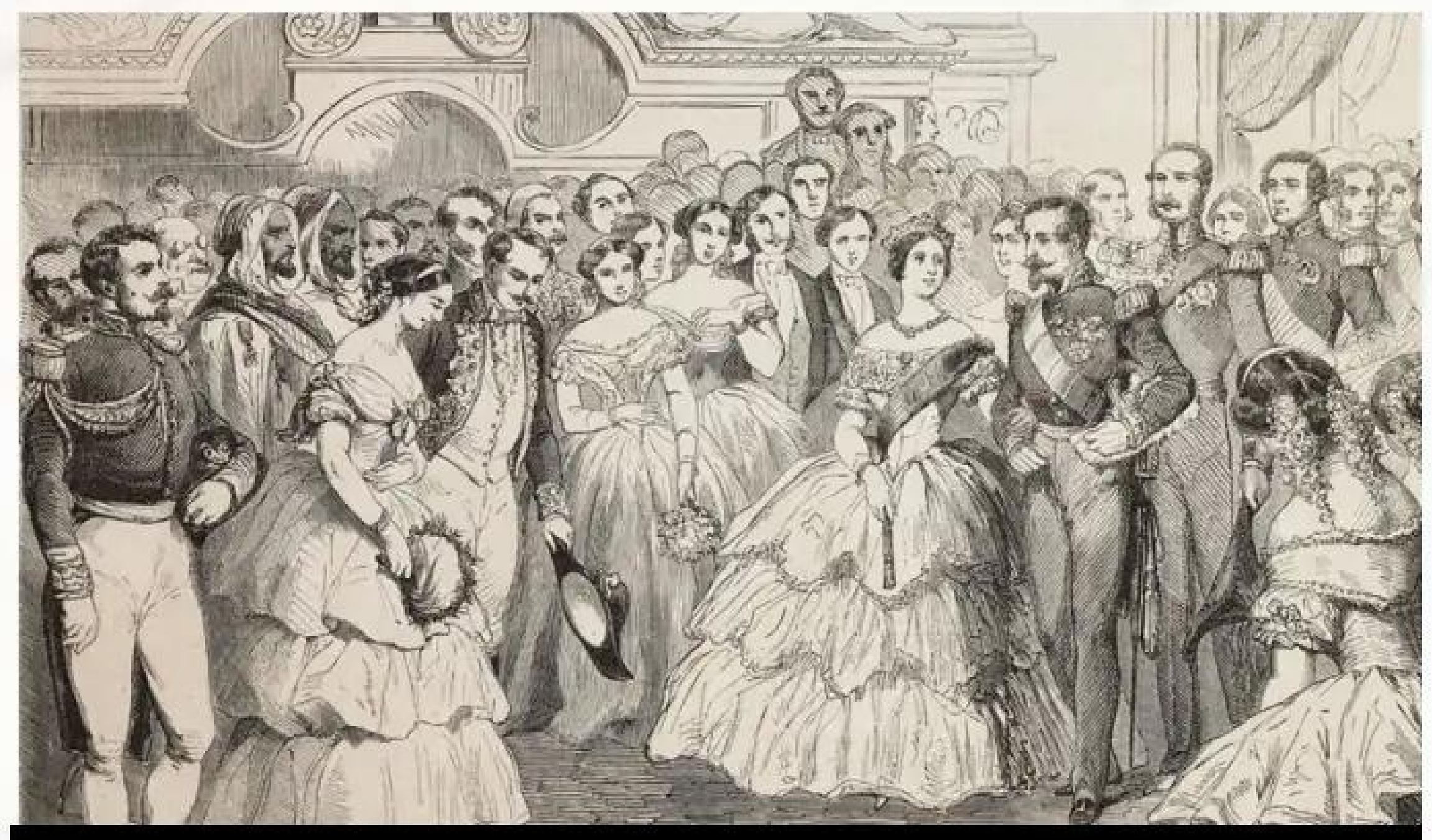
> *"Napoleon III was no pushover and he was still extremely ambitious for the French people"*

Although Napoleon III has suffered in comparison to his uncle, often being likened to a pale imitation of the first Bonaparte emperor, he was nonetheless a successful ruler in his own right. He had notable success overseeing and extending his empire, even if he did so without the same bombastic panache and military genius, relying instead on building alliances and investing in the wider French colonial territories.

However, as with his uncle, Napoleon III's dreams of glory were destined to ultimately fail thanks to a combination of his own weak health, the distrust of his allies who suspected that he had designs upon neighbouring Luxembourg and Belgium, and, most crucially, the rise of a new Prussian empire immediately east, which had great ambitions to create a new German superpower by ending the uneasy coalition that existed between France, Britain, Russia and Austria.

Despite Napoleon III's efforts to avert conflict, which intensified after the Prussians defeated the Austrians in 1866 and he found himself short of allies, he was forced to declare war against Prussia in July 1870. The ensuing war was a total disaster for the French and was over by the start of September after a string of terrible defeats – beaten, exhausted and humiliated, Napoleon III surrendered to the Prussians and was taken prisoner. When he was eventually released six months later, he returned once again to exile in England, his reign over, his empire in tatters and the Bonaparte ascendancy at an end.


The exhausted and disappointed Napoleon heads the French retreat from Russia in 1812. The campaign lasted for just over five months and resulted in the deaths of over 500,000 French troops and almost as many Russians

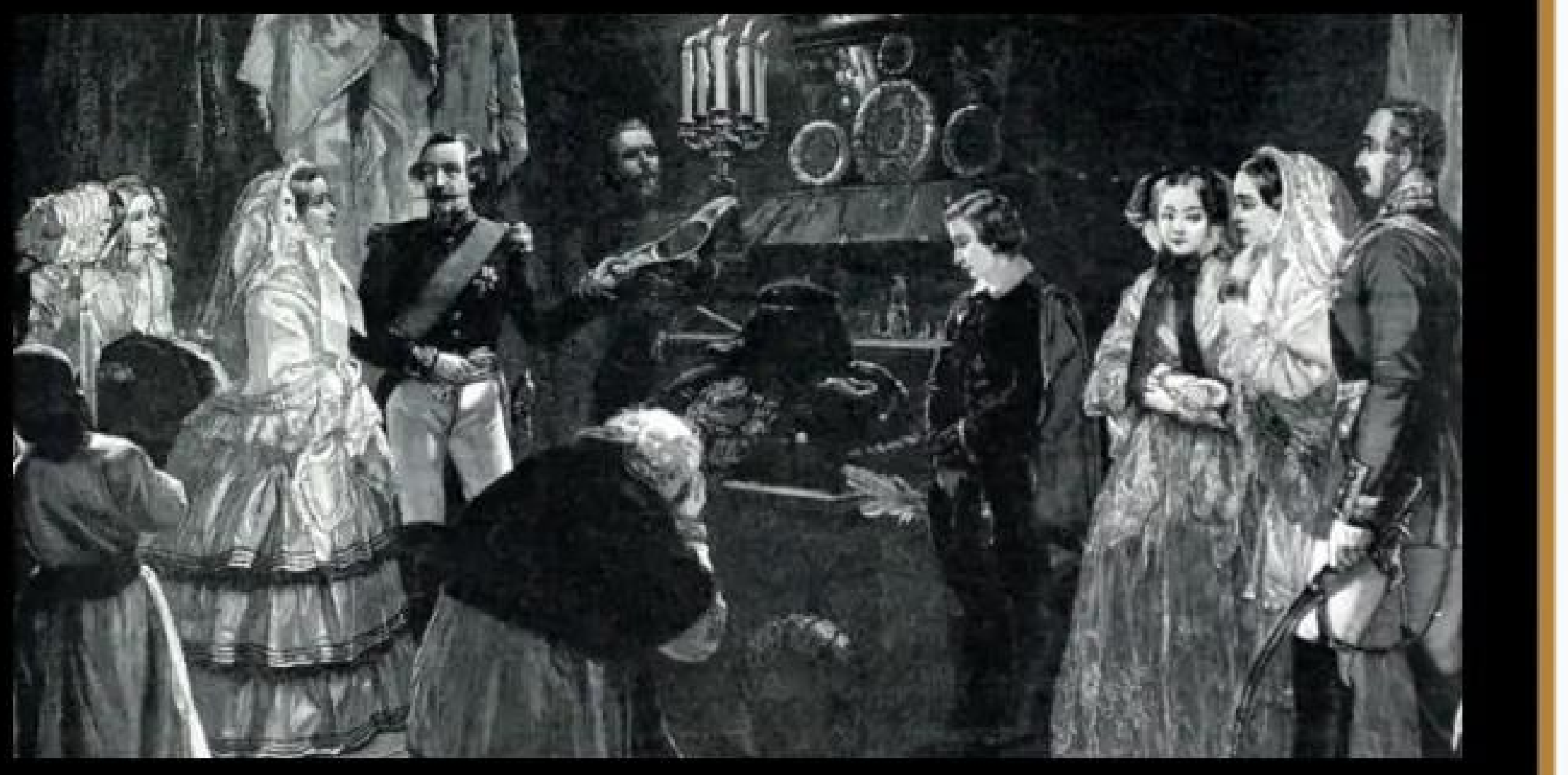

Napoleon III spent several years in England and enjoyed a cordial relationship with the British, especially Queen Victoria, whom he entertained on a visit to Paris in August 1855

UNLIKELY FRIENDS

While Napoleon I's foreign policy had been dominated by his loathing of the British and determination to defeat them on land and at sea, his nephew Napoleon III had a very different approach

Waterloo may have been a distant memory when the future Queen Victoria was born in May 1819, but the spectre of Napoleon still cast a long shadow across Europe, particularly in Britain, which had been one of his most bitter enemies. It's entirely understandable therefore that Victoria should have been suspicious of his nephew Napoleon III, even if he had spent several years in England and was clearly keen to create a friendly alliance between their nations.

However, when Napoleon and his wife Eugénie visited London in April 1855, it was a total success as Victoria was completely charmed by them both and even privately described the emperor as "a very extraordinary man". When Victoria, Albert and their two eldest children paid a return visit to Paris in August that year, during which Napoleon III threw Victoria a lavish ball in the palace of Versailles and took her on a private tour of Marie Antoinette's Petit Trianon, the bond between the two rulers became even closer. This was then reflected in the increasingly warm relations between Britain and France, which would continue until Napoleon's eventual fall from power, and it had a significant effect on the success of his empire.


Although just over 40 years had passed since Napoleon's final defeat at Waterloo, it still must have been a surreal moment for all present when his nephew Napoleon III escorted Queen Victoria on a special private visit to Napoleon's tomb in the Invalides, Paris

1848

THE SPRINGTIME OF NATIONS

In 1848, a wave of revolutions swept through Europe; it was unlike anything seen before... or since

Written by Catherine Curzon

Known to some as the Springtime of Nations, 1848 was a year of change. Revolutions surged across Europe as people cried out for a new liberal future in which they would sweep away the antiquated structures of monarchy. No longer willing to accept the divine right of kings nor the monarchical structures that promoted them, they called for a continent of nation-states, ruled over by democracy. Tired of having little to absolute zero say in government and with social conditions growing increasingly worse for the poor or working class, including famine caused by crop failures, the time had come for change.

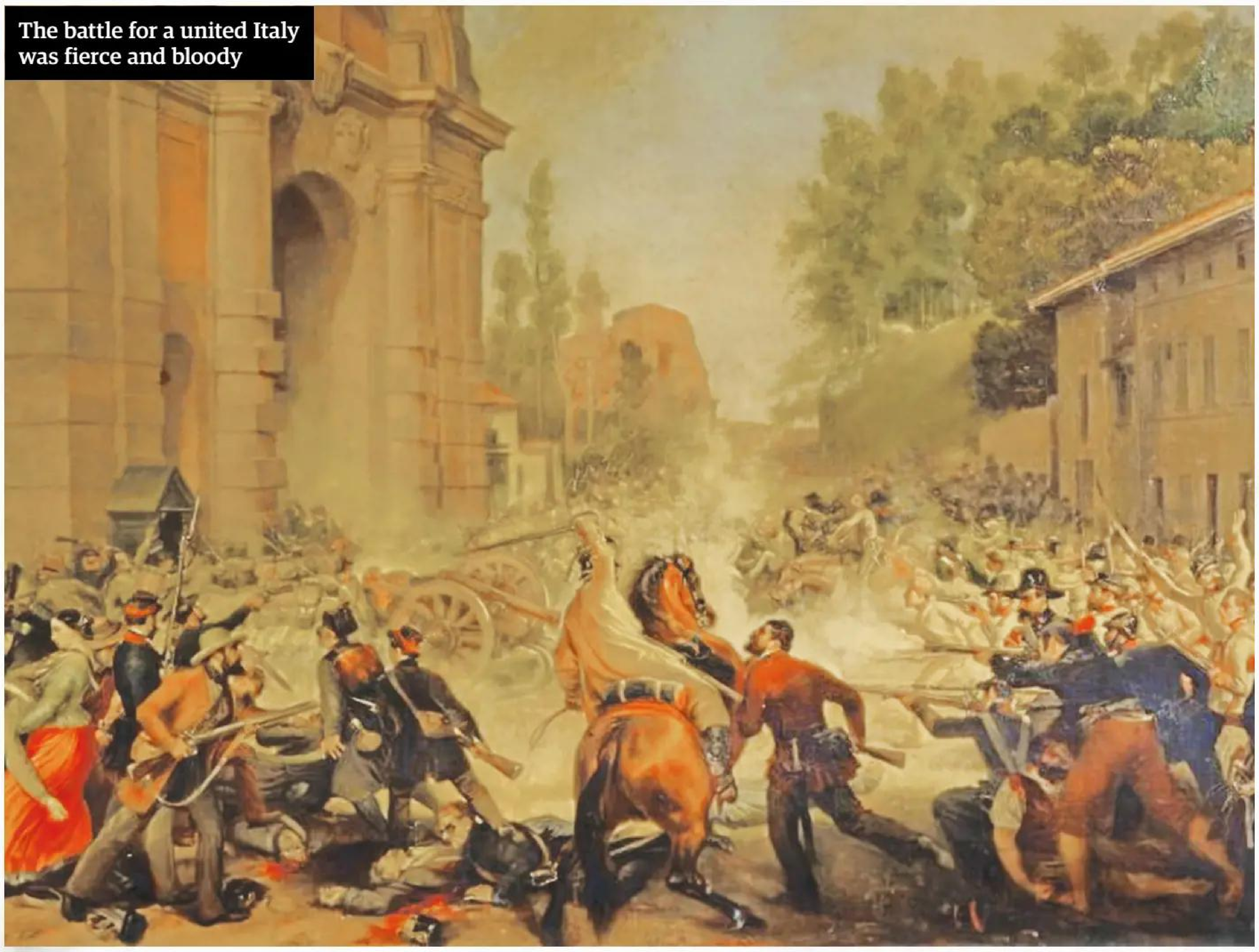
Beginning with the revolution in Italy in January, a tide of revolt engulfed Europe, with more than 50 countries affected. With the middle and working classes - and even some of the upper classes, who were tired of absolutism - ready for reform, it was the lower classes who led the charge. For those in newly industrialised cities, conditions were dreadful, while for the residents of rural areas, food shortages and exploitation by landowners was rife. With Europe a powder keg crying out for democracy, revolution was inevitable.

THE ITALIAN STATES

The Bourbons face the music

In 1848, a revolution broke out in Palermo, Sicily, against the rule of Bourbon king, Ferdinand II. The successful revolt resulted in an independent state and liberal constitution, though Ferdinand would reconquer Sicily the following year. With protests breaking out in other Italian states as they called for constitutions and even a unified Italian confederation of states, other leaders granted constitutions and more freedoms to their subjects.

However, under the leadership of Klemens von Metternich, Austria refused to give in to protests and the subsequent riots tipped Italy into the First War of Independence. Having declared independence from Austria, the Republic of San Marco and the Kingdom of Sardinia joined forces in an effort to unite Northern Italy against the Habsburg Empire, but their efforts were in vain. Sardinia was defeated and San Marco conquered by Austrian troops. For now at least, Italy's revolutionaries had failed.



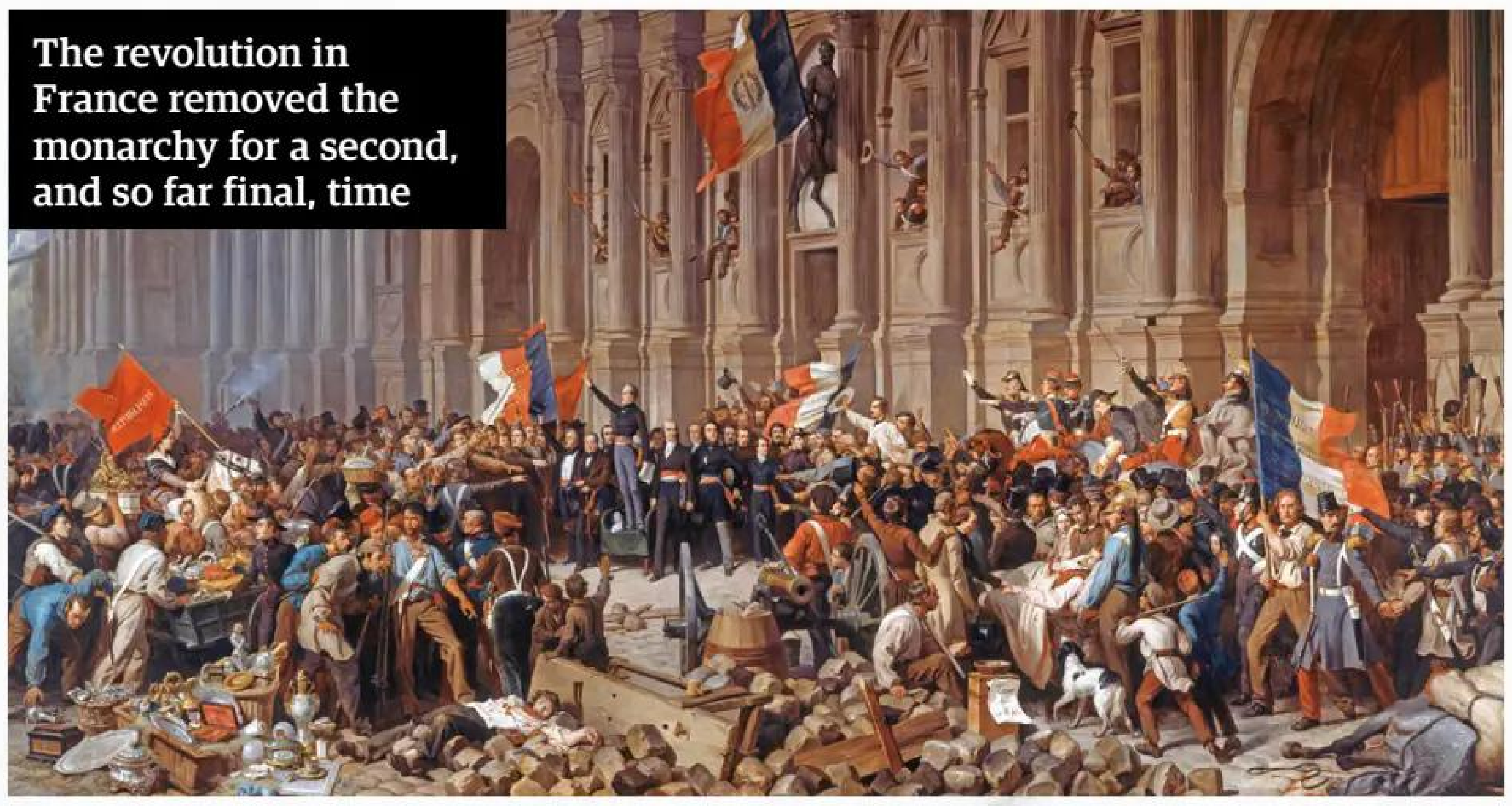
The battle for a united Italy was fierce and bloody

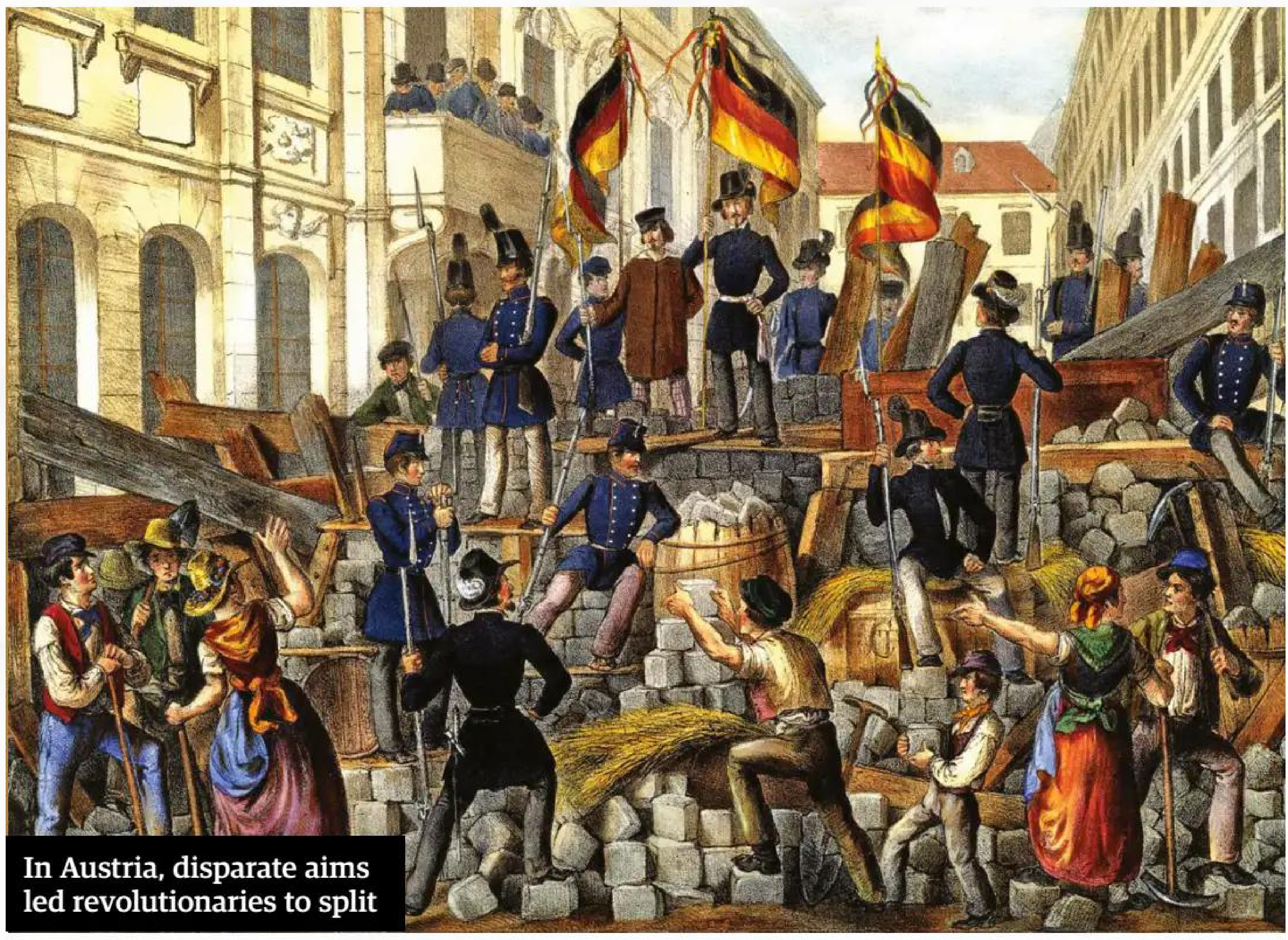
FRANCE

The February Revolution that toppled the monarchy

In February 1848, workers and students united on the streets of Paris to protest against the suppression of the campagne des banquets, private political meetings where left-wing moderates met to organise themselves and plan their campaign for electoral reform. On 22 February, unarmed crowds poured through the city in protest, catching the authorities entirely by surprise, and began to build barricades in the streets, calling for the removal of Prime Minister François Guizot.

Troops were brought into Paris and on 23 February, King Louis Philippe accepted Guizot's resignation. However, though they had achieved one aim, the crowds still called for social reform and a more equal society; the regime was still broken. In order to reinforce this message, 600 protestors gathered on the Boulevard des Capucines. A weapon was fired, and soldiers responded by opening fire, killing 52 protestors. As news of the massacre swept through Paris, more barricades began to spring up. The King, meanwhile, was desperately trying to find a new prime minister who was able to form a cabinet. He warned troops against causing any further bloodshed, but armed protestors were closing in on the Tuileries Palace. Though some advisors encouraged Louis Philippe to crush the revolt with force, the King could see no option other than abdication. He formally handed the crown to his nine-year-old grandson, then fled Paris with Queen Maria Amalia at his side. There was no saving the monarchy this time; despite the efforts of the new King's mother, Helene, Duchess of Orléans, France declared itself a republic once more.


The revolution in France removed the monarchy for a second, and so far final, time


In Austria, disparate aims led revolutionaries to split

THE GERMAN STATES

The March Revolution called for unity

Straining under taxation and state control, the residents of the German states were inspired by France to rise up against the influence of Metternich, state chancellor to Emperor Ferdinand I of Austria.

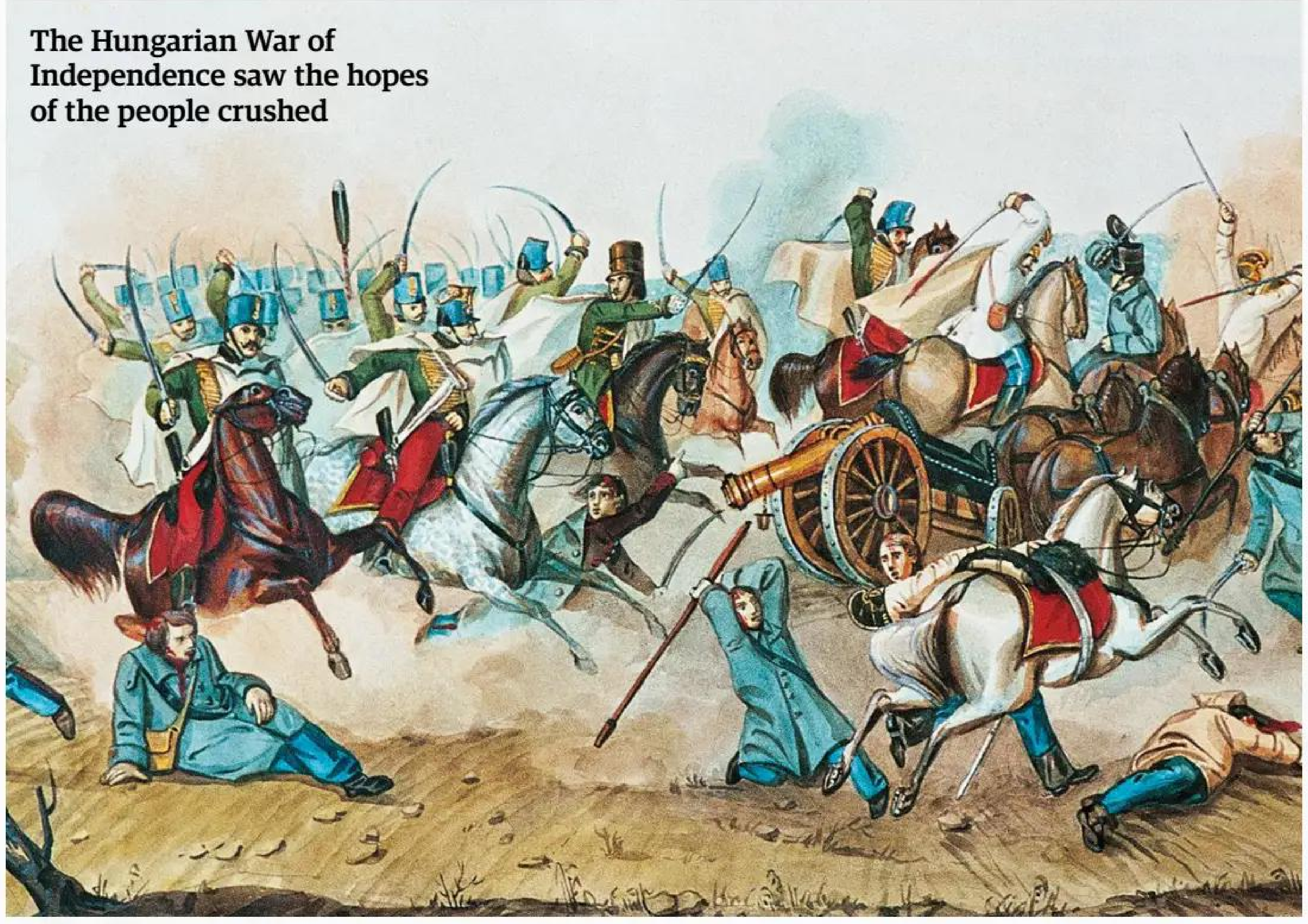
Austria was chief among the German states and it was there that the first protest broke out, when students held a demonstration in Vienna on 13 March. Their demands for an elected assembly, a constitution and universal suffrage for males were met with armed resistance by troops. Several demonstrators were killed, but this did not deter the protestors. Faced with the prospect of pitched battles in the streets, the Emperor dismissed Metternich. When Ferdinand's first effort at drafting a constitution was met with demonstrations that spread into Hungary and beyond, the monarch abdicated. However, though the revolutionaries came tantalisingly close to victory, it was not to be. When the Frankfurt Assembly was established in answer to the protest, supposedly to represent the people, it became mired in a tangle of self-interest. With no central coordination, the working class and middle class elements of the revolution split, never to reach a common ground.

THE AUSTRIAN EMPIRE

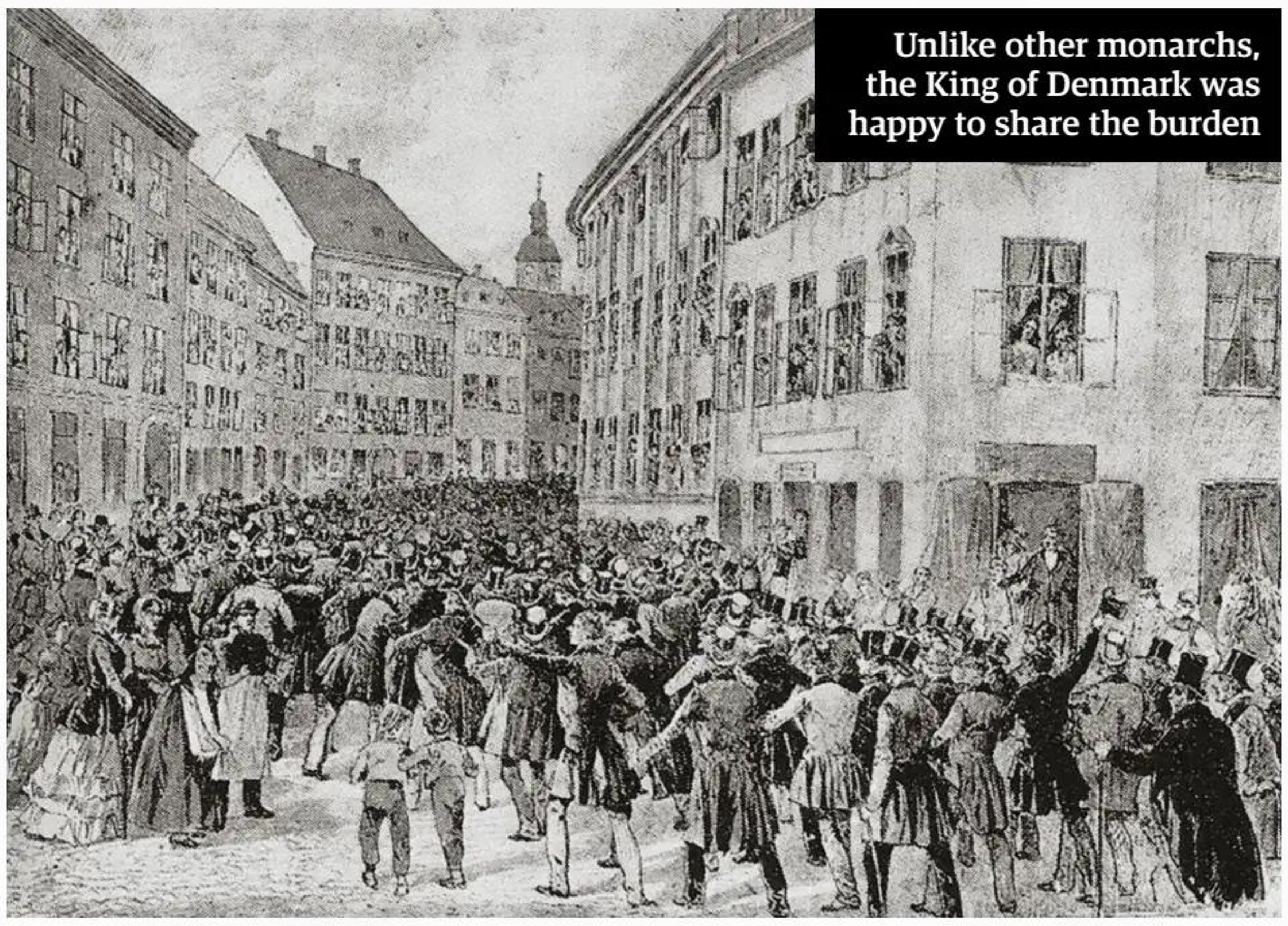
Unrest in the German states spread

Hungary was a country ripe for protest thanks to tension over religion, land ownership and economics. The people were crying out for reform to the feudal system that throttled the peasantry, who were little more than forced, rather than properly paid, labour. When a potato famine caused soaring food prices and starvation among the poor, things reached a head.

The revolution in the German states resulted in a massive upheaval in the Austrian government, where Metternich's resignation led to a number of short-lived governments. With Austria involved in multiple armed conflicts, it could offer little resistance to the revolutions that spread across Hungary. The demands for voting and parliamentary reform were accepted by the imperial court and serfdom was finally abolished. However, a fiercely fought War of Independence followed as the Habsburg Army, reinforced by Russian forces, fought back. The revolution was ultimately crushed, though it became an enduring symbol of freedom.


The Hungarian War of Independence saw the hopes of the people crushed

Images: Getty Images, Alamy



Unlike other monarchs, the King of Denmark was happy to share the burden

DENMARK

The absolute monarchy faces a challenge

When King Frederick VII assumed the Danish throne in January 1848, people were not hopeful. In fact, with little experience in state business, a turbulent private life and no intention of shouldering the responsibilites required of an absolute monarch, the new sovereign was already considering the benefits of a constitutional state.

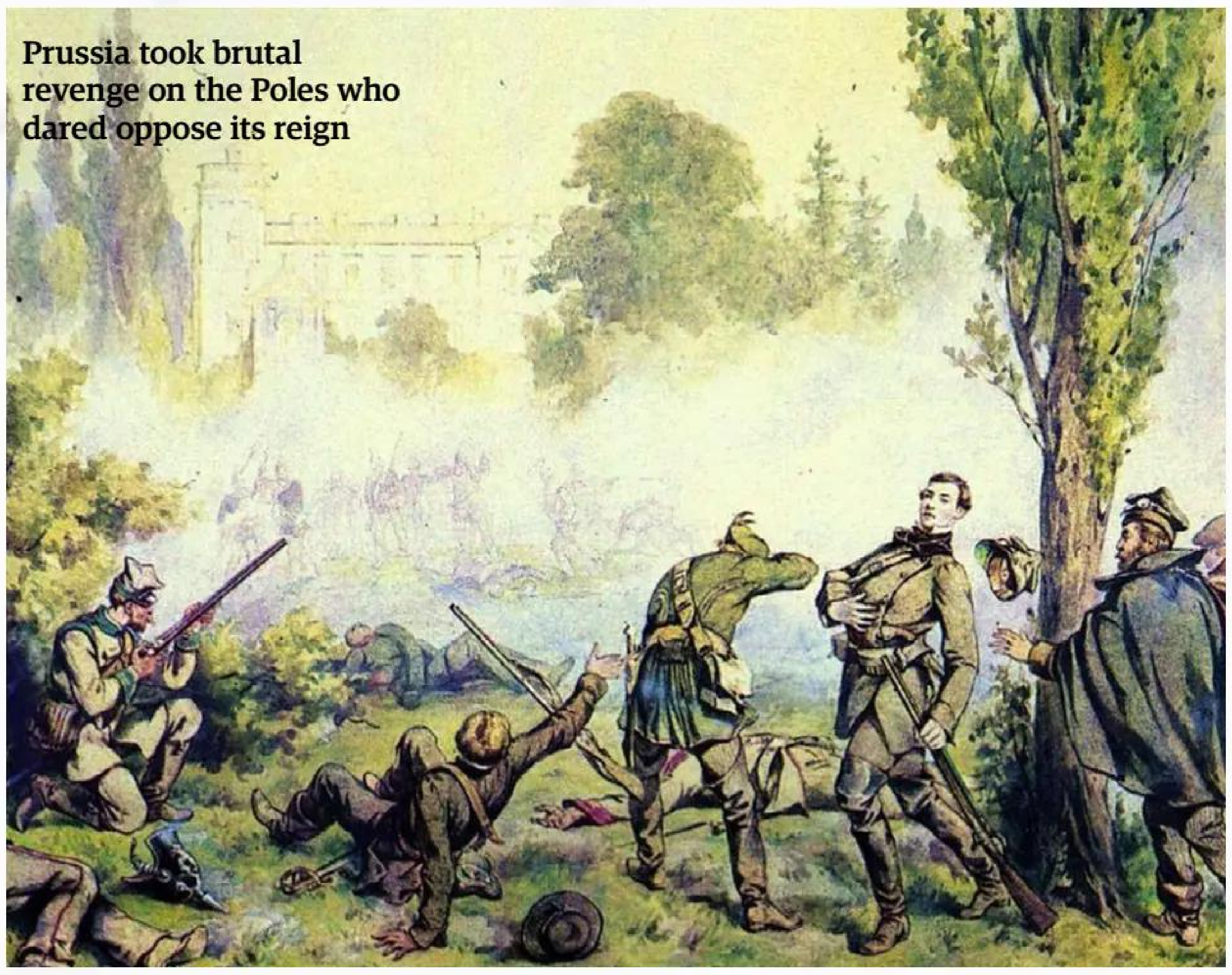
On 21 March, protestors calling for a new constitution marched to Christiansborg Castle, where they intended to demand a new government. They arrived to find that the King had already dismissed his ministers and was open to discussion with the protestors, who wanted to abolish absolutism and install a liberal administration. Frederick VII accepted their demands and installed a new government, in which he included leaders of the national Liberal Party; he also happily agreed to a constitution under which he would share power with parliament. Now, said Frederick as he signed away his absolutism, he would finally be able to enjoy a lie-in.

POLAND

This military insurrection failed to succeed

Poland was partitioned by the Congress of Vienna into three parts, the Grand Duchy of Poznań, which was ruled by Prussia; the free Republic of Cracow; and the Congress Kingdom of Poland, both of which were under Russian control. The uprising of 1848 occurred in the Prussian partition, where the people wanted a free and independent nation.

The Polish people established the Polish National Committee, demanding a new Polish administration. However, while the Committee claimed to be democratic, it allowed only Poles to join and refused to cooperate with Jewish or German people. Negotiations with King Frederick William IV of Prussia broke down and, with the Poles fearing that Russia may intervene in support of Prussia, violent conflicts broke out. The uprising was crushed by Prussian forces and led to brutal recriminations for those who were captured.



Prussia took brutal revenge on the Poles who dared oppose its reign

Members of the Belgian Legion attempted to lead a revolt in their homeland

BELGIUM

Belgium's revolts were smaller than most

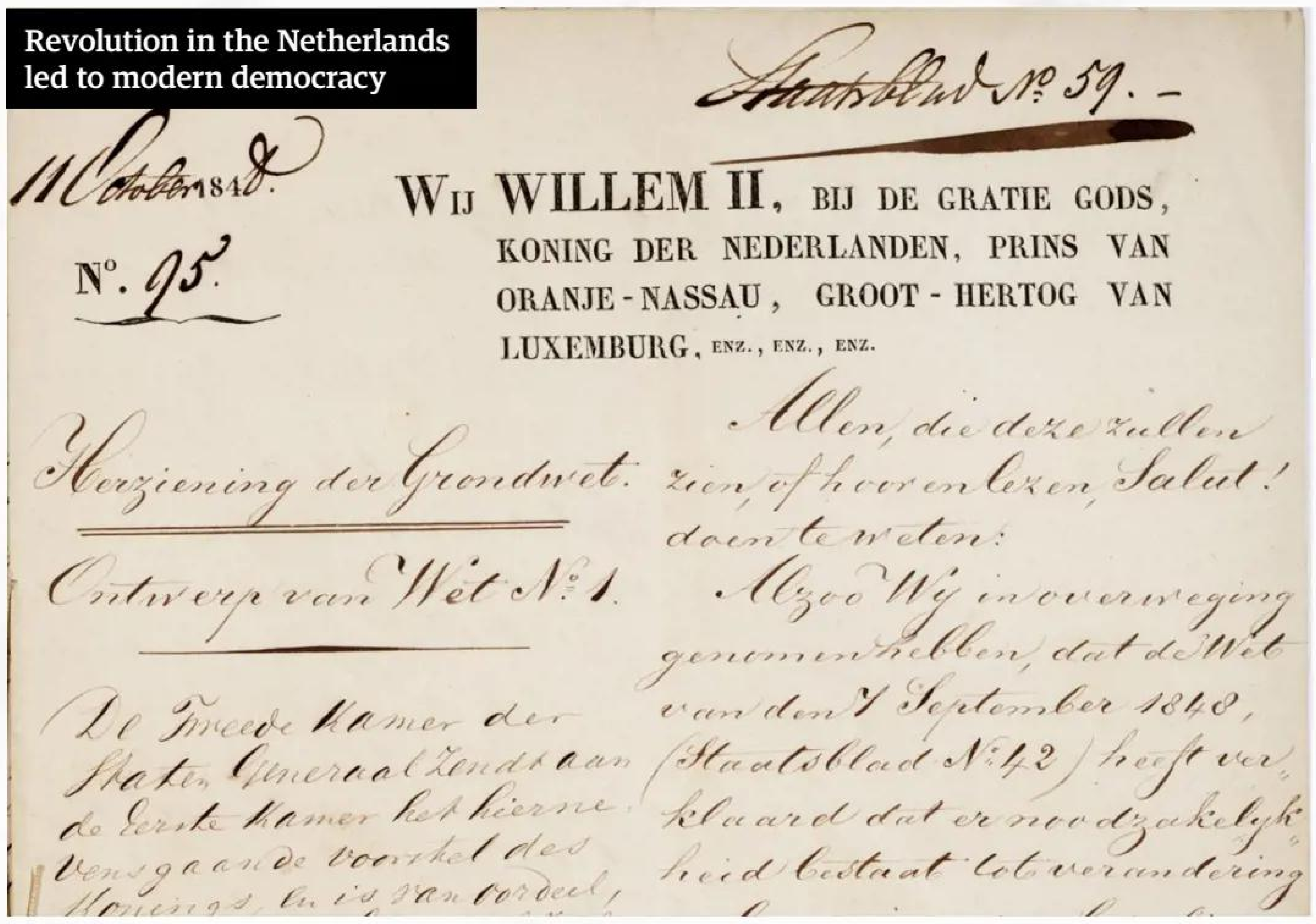
Unlike its European neighbours, Belgium escaped major upheaval in 1848. The country had already brought in sweeping liberal reforms after it experienced revolution in 1830 and its monarchy and constitutional system faced no significant challenge in 1848. Though there were some small pockets of unrest, the most significant threat came from Belgium émigrés in France, who were calling for the abolition of the monarchy. In late March, 6,000 armed émigrés of the Belgian Legion – émigrés who had supported the French Revolution – attempted to enter Belgium. Though most were apprehended, some managed to make it across the border and marched towards Brussels. However, they were swiftly defeated by Belgian troops, effectively ending the attempted revolution. The status quo was to remain, shored up by elections that returned the popular governing party with a strong mandate.

THE NETHERLANDS

A revolution of a different sort

When revolution came to the Netherlands, it didn't take the form of violent protests and barricades. Unlike other countries, the instigators managed to bring about constitutional reform without having to fire a single shot. Mindful of the revolts raging in the countries around him, when King William II was approached by the liberal parliamentary opposition with a list of desired reforms, he was open to negotiation. Rather than having to face a potentially violent revolution, he instead agreed to parliamentary reform, ushering in a more democratic system of government. On 17 March 1848, the King set up a state commission to arrange everything, which was headed by liberal politician, Johan Rudolph Thorbecke.

The reforms established the foundation of modern democracy in the Netherlands, including as it did a bill of rights, a new constitution and a complete overhaul of the parliamentary system. It was, in itself, revolutionary, and served as the basis of the Dutch Constitution, that still exists today.



Revolution in the Netherlands led to modern democracy

~~Staatsblad~~ No. 59. –

11 October 1848.

No. 95.

WIJ WILLEM II, BIJ DE GRATIE GODS, KONING DER NEDERLANDEN, PRINS VAN ORANJE-NASSAU, GROOT-HERTOG VAN LUXEMBURG, ENZ., ENZ., ENZ.

Herziening der Grondwet.

Ontwerp van Wet No. 1.

De Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal zendt aan de Eerste Kamer het hierne vensgaande voorstel des Konings, en is van oordeel,

Allen, die deze zullen zien of hooren lezen, Salut! doen te weten:

Alzoo Wij in overweging genomen hebben, dat de Wet van den 7 September 1848, (Staatsblad No. 42) heeft verklaard dat er noodzakelykheid bestaat tot verandering

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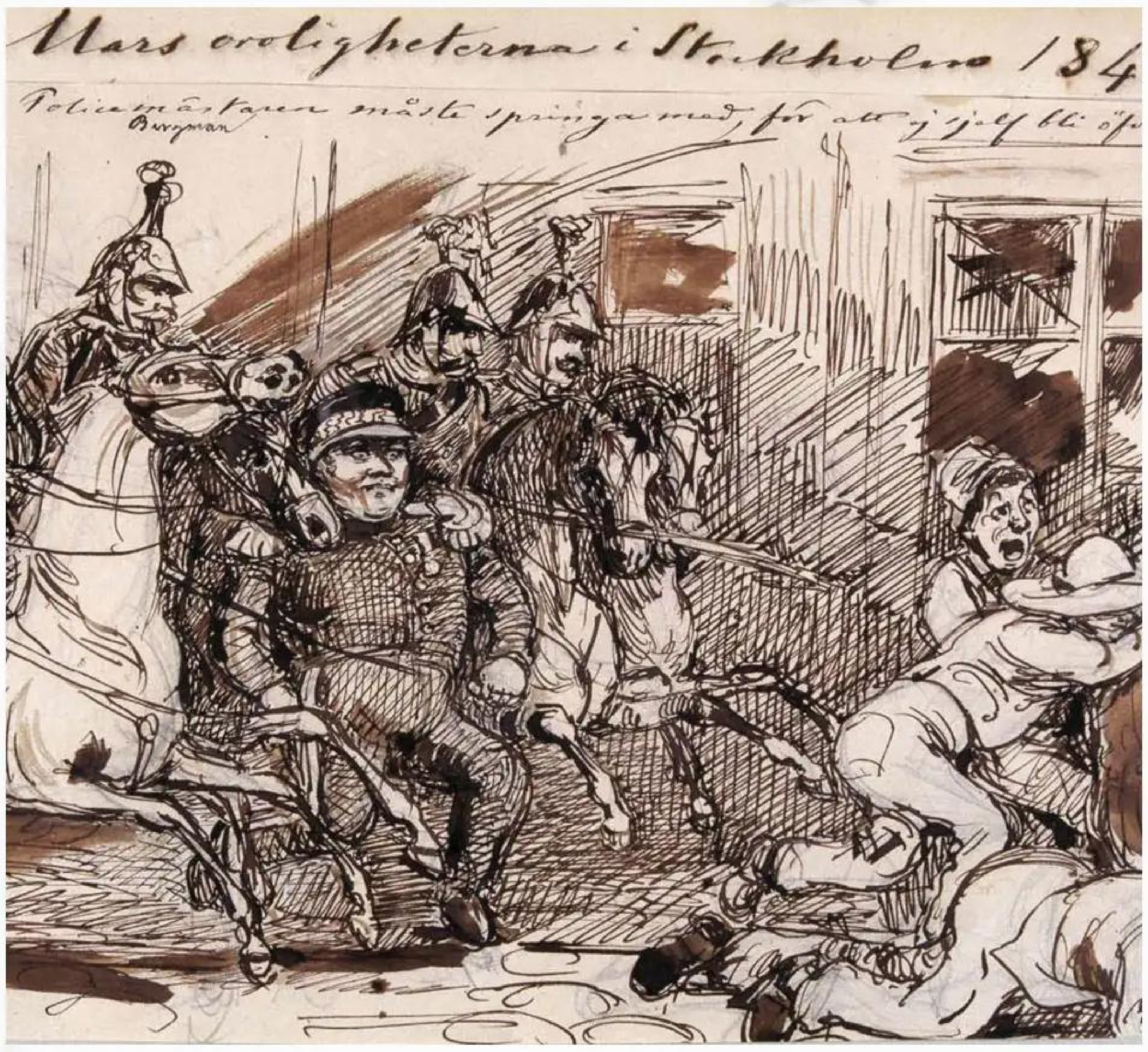
SWEDEN

The Battle for Stockholm was fierce

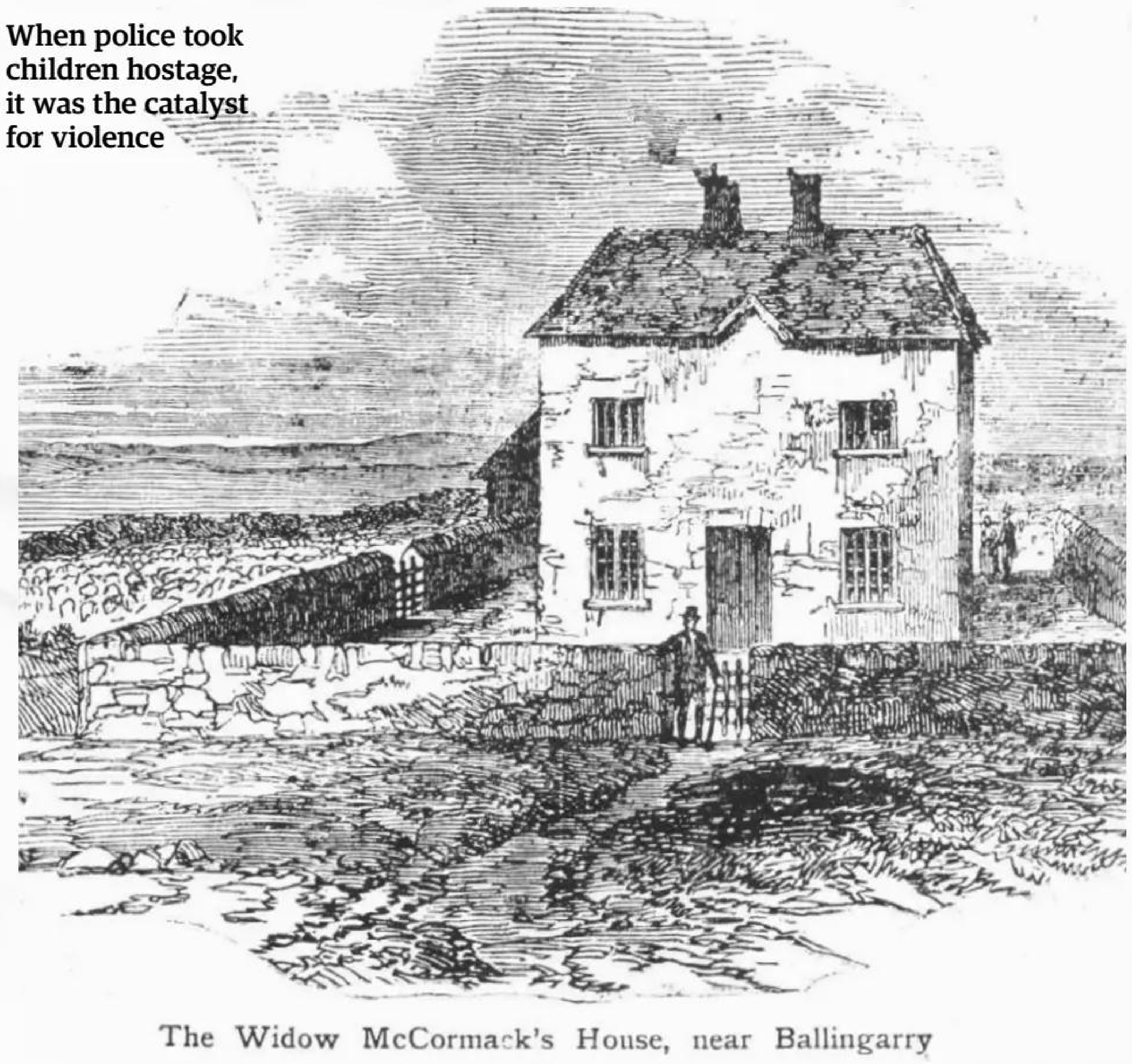
Inspired by news from France, on 18 March the people of Stockholm came out to call for electoral and parliamentary reform. They marched on the Hotel de la Croix, where influential figures were enjoying a banquet, and attempted to gain entry. The protest was subdued by police, but similar scenes occurred that evening, crowding the streets outside the royal palace.

King Oscar I met the protestors in the street, seeking a way to peacefully end the unrest. He ordered the release of those who had already been arrested and hoped that would be an end to it. Instead, more demonstrators assembled, and the unrest continued into the following day, with more vandalism and looting taking place. This time the King called out the militia, who effectively put an end to the protests. Fearing for their property, wealthy citizens formed their own militias; the short-lived Swedish revolution, however, was over.


Mars oroligheterna i Stockholm 184
Poliemästaren måste springa med, för att ej sjelf bli öf
Bergman

Though the King met protestors, the Swedish revolution was not destined to succeed

When police took children hostage, it was the catalyst for violence


The Widow McCormack's House, near Ballingarry

IRELAND

The Young Ireland rebellion

On 29 July in the small settlement of Farranrory, revolution came to Ireland. Laid low by the Great Famine, Irish nationalists were calling for an Irish parliament that would hold full executive and legislative powers. A group known as Young Ireland travelled through the country calling for reform. Barricades were built and, when local police approached to break up the demonstration, the rebels pursued them.

The fleeing police officers found refuge in a farmhouse, where they took five children as hostages. When the protestors approached, the officers opened fire, leading to a gunbattle that lasted for hours. Two Young Irelanders were shot dead, and the siege was only ended when armed police arrived to provide backup.

The nationalists were sentenced to death, though their sentences were commuted to transportation to Australia. The Battle of Widow McCormack's Cabbage Patch had cost them dear.

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

1914-1918

THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

Between July 1914 and November 1918, a war broke out that would alter the course of Europe indefinitely. Alliances were shattered, borders shifted, and the world would never be the same...

Written by Emma Slattery Williams

In the early 20th century, five major powers dominated Europe: Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary. But as is often the case when big characters are in close proximity, it wasn't a harmonious existence. Germany sought to expand it territory and rival the British Empire. France harboured resentment towards Germany after losing the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, which cost them the region of Alsace-Lorraine. Austria-Hungary and Russia clashed over control of the Balkans – once part of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan people, with Serbia at the forefront, yearned for independence, free from the influence of either Austria-Hungary or Russia. Bad enough on their own, these tensions would ultimately go on to spark a catastrophic chain of events.

King George V of Britain, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and the Tsarina Alexandra of Russia were all first cousins and grandchildren of Queen Victoria. Tsar Nicholas II of Russia and George V were also cousins via their grandfather, Christian IX of Denmark – though these blood ties weren't strong enough to prevent war.

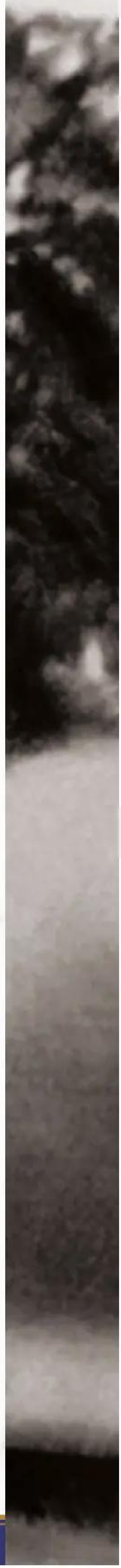
Wilhelm envied Britain's vast colonial empire and the economic prosperity it provided. He saw Germany's future success as being dependent on its naval power – the British Royal Navy had ruled the seas for the past few centuries and Wilhelm wanted to change this. In 1906, Britain launched the first in a new class of powerful warships, the HMS Dreadnought. Its launch meant that German ships were now obsolete against its firepower, range and speed. Predictably, a naval arms race ensued as both nations competed to rule the seas.

In 1879, Germany and Austria-Hungary formed the Dual Alliance for defensive purposes, later joined by Italy. This powerful bloc alarmed neighbouring countries, prompting Britain, France and Russia to create the Triple Entente in 1907. By 1914, Europe was primed for conflict, and all that remained was a spark to set the world alight.

On 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand – heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire – was assassinated in Sarajevo along with his wife Sophie. The Black Hand, a Serbian nationalist group, carried out the attack. Despite no links found between the attackers and the Serbian government, there were calls in Vienna for war to crush Serbian independence. Wilhelm II gave his backing to Austria-Hungary's actions – giving them the freedom to make a decision that would irrevocably change Europe.

Austria-Hungary invaded Serbia on 28 July and soon Nicholas II, loyal to Serbia, was preparing his troops in Russia. When a German demand to halt mobilisation went ignored, Germany then declared war on Russia. After falsely claiming that France had dropped bombs on their territory, Germany declared war on France. The British government was initially hesitant to get involved, but once Germany invaded Belgium, their hand was forced. Now followed a domino effect as the 1839 Treaty of London came into play – this protected neutral Belgium from a foreign attack. As German forces headed towards France, soon Brussels had fallen and on 4 August, Britain declared war on Germany.

Patriotic fever now swept across Europe and men enlisted for what they saw as a big adventure, which would be over by Christmas. Over the course of the entire war, 68 million soldiers were mobilised.

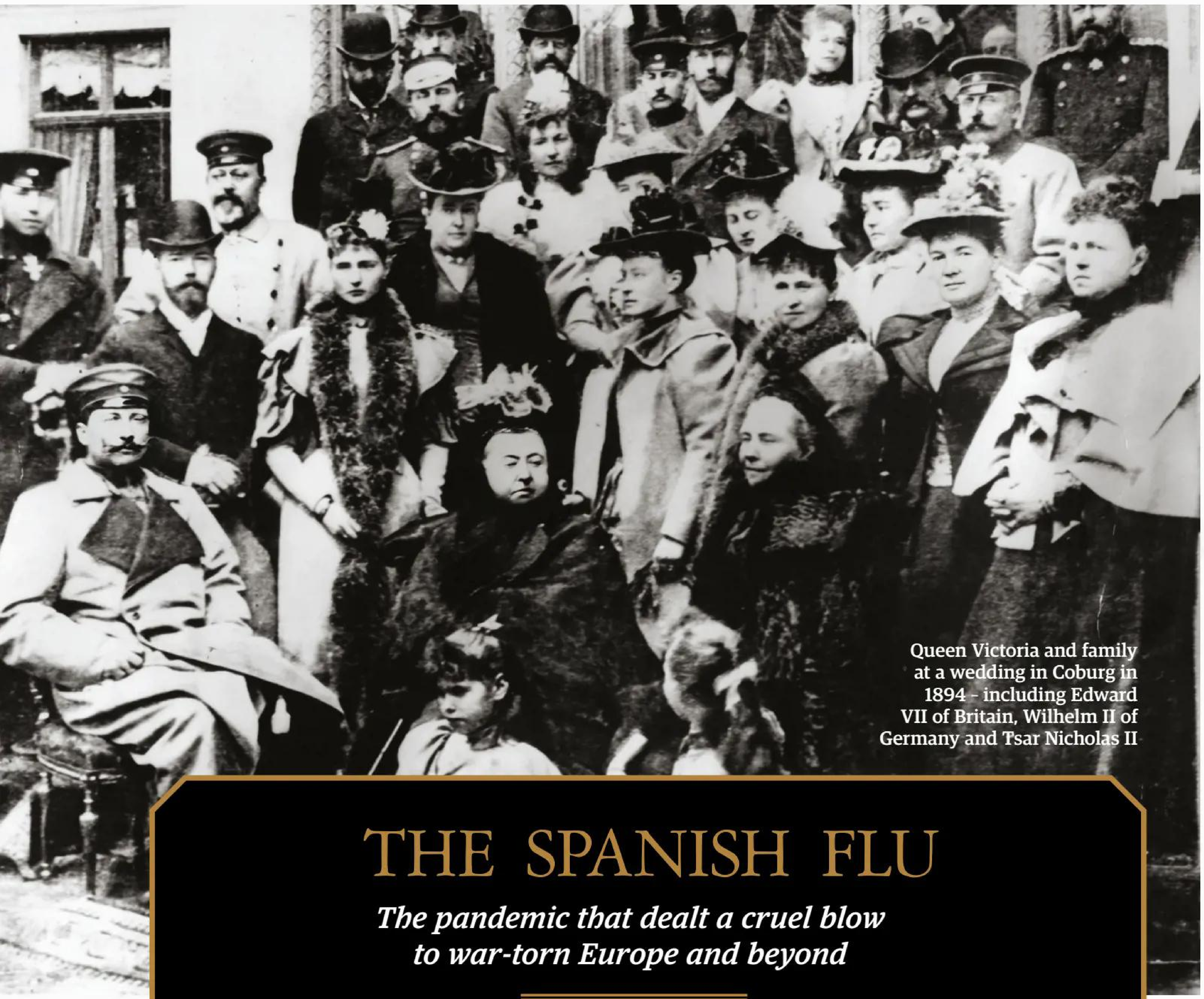


The conditions in the trenches were brutal, unsafe and traumatic

> *"The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime"*

QUOTE FROM BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY, SIR EDWARD GREY, AT THE TIME OF BRITAIN DECLARING WAR

Images: Getty Images; Alamy


Queen Victoria and family at a wedding in Coburg in 1894 – including Edward VII of Britain, Wilhelm II of Germany and Tsar Nicholas II

Countries started to pick sides. Due to their history with Serbia during the Balkans War, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. By 1915, Italy decided to abandon the Triple Alliance and joined the Allies. Although the fighting was contained to Europe, the repercussions were felt worldwide as soldiers from imperial colonies were brought in – 3 million soldiers and labourers came from across the British Empire and Commonwealth. In 1916, Romania joined the Allies as did Greece the following year. Both sides tried to woo Turkey into joining them, hoping to gain access to the Black Sea and Suez Canal. Eventually they invaded the Russian province of Caucasus.

The first major battle of WWI was at Ypres, where Germany, Britain and Belgium raced towards the sea to gain control of strategically important French ports. French reinforcements ensured that Germany didn't break through. The war soon settled into a brutal stalemate as both sides embedded themselves in lines of continuous trenches stretching from the English Channel to the Swiss border.

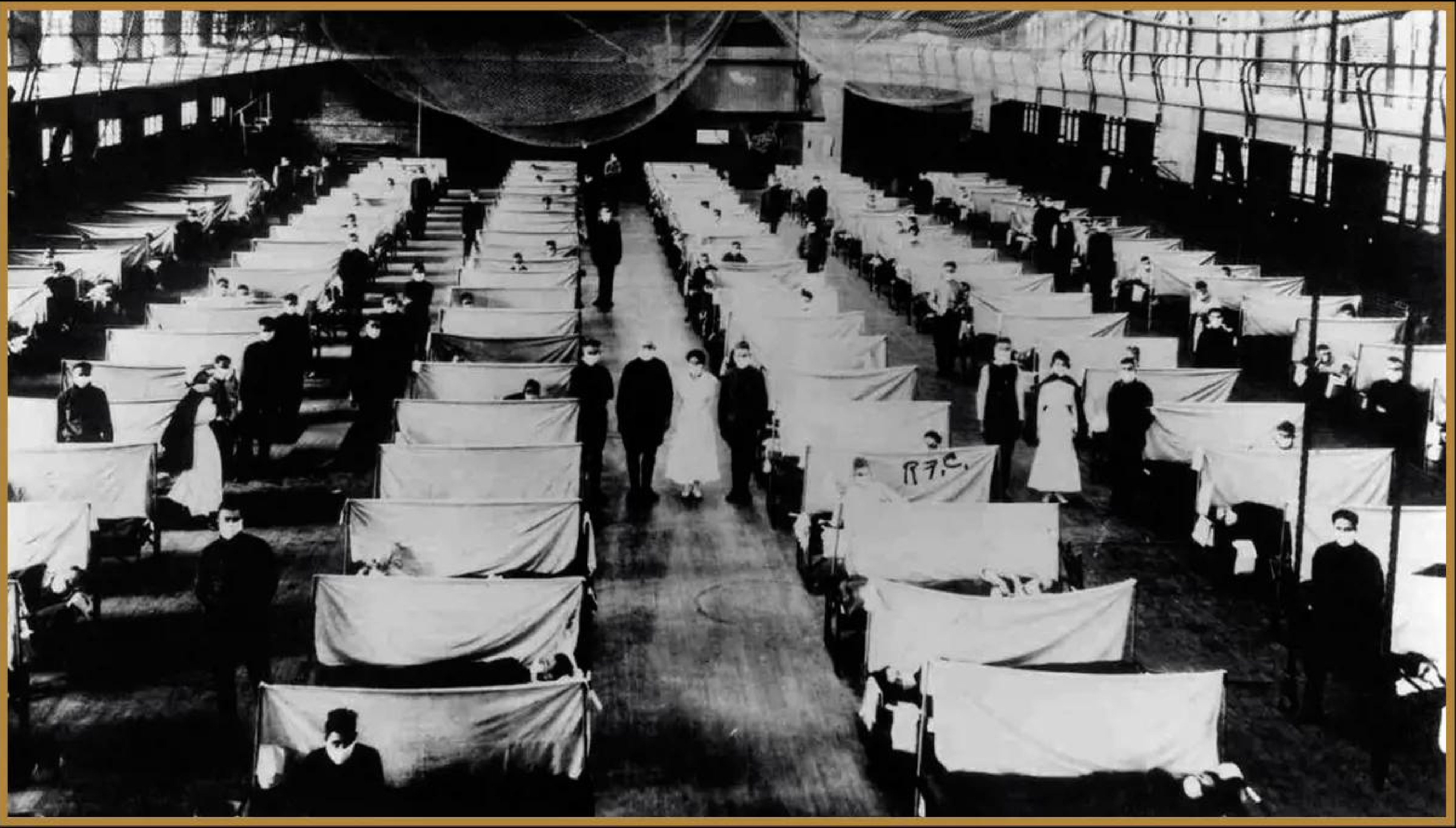
Life in the trenches was horrifically hard. Mud, litter, rats running wild, excrement and eventually rotting bodies filled the floor. From autumn through to spring the trenches flooded causing trench foot – a condition leading to gangrene and amputation. For those lucky men who returned, even if they managed to return physically unscathed, the mental impact took its toll. Few could return to the factory, office or farm and go on as before as if nothing had happened. Loved ones couldn't begin to comprehend what they

THE SPANISH FLU

The pandemic that dealt a cruel blow to war-torn Europe and beyond

While the world's attention was focused on the aftermath of World War I, another global catastrophe struck: the Spanish Flu pandemic. In 1918 and 1919, the Spanish Flu swept through Europe and beyond, killing an estimated 50 million people worldwide – far more than the war itself. It was nicknamed the Spanish Flu as due to wartime censorship, Spain was one of the few countries reporting on it, leading many to assume it was the source of the outbreak and one of the most affected places. The pandemic was exacerbated by the movement of troops and the crowded conditions in wartime Europe. The flu had a devastating effect on Europe's already fragile economies and its suffering people. Germany and Austria-Hungary had higher mortality rates compared to Britain and France, potentially aiding the Allied war effort.

In some countries, the pandemic led to labour shortages, as many workers fell ill or died, further slowing economic recovery after the war. The Spanish Flu also highlighted the inadequacies of public health systems, which struggled to cope with the scale of the pandemic. This pandemic, occurring as it did on the heels of the Great War, compounded Europe's suffering, leaving scars that would be felt long into the 20th century.



Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Sophie moments before their assassination in Sarajevo

German soldiers on the front

had witnessed and endured. Many soldiers returned with 'shell shock' – trauma caused by constant explosions and the horrors of war, now known to be PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

Back home the mass exodus of men left gaps in the workforce. Eventually women were brought in to take their place in industrial and agricultural roles, as well as nursing the wounded soldiers. In Britain by the end of the war, there 1.3 million women working and over half of these were in jobs previously done by men. Though these women gained new freedoms, there were worries over what happened when the men returned, and there were also concerns over their moral welfare. Skirts and dresses grew shorter, women began smoking and drinking in public and there was a 30 per cent rise in the illegitimacy rate during the war years.

In July 1916, the darkest day for the British army arrived with the Battle of the Somme. The army advanced on the German trenches following a barrage of shelling — however this hadn't destroyed the German defences as planned. The advancing British were mown down by heavy artillery fire in their thousands – they suffered 57,470 casualties with 19,240 deaths on the first day. This bloody battle dragged on for five months, with both sides losing over 1 million men, and only a small distance of ground gained. When news of this devastating failure reached home, morale among the forces plummeted, as did recruitment.

Meanwhile in Russia, the war's devastating toll on the army exacerbated the unpopularity that was felt towards the Tsar, who had taken personal command of the military. Faced with food and fuel shortages and a demoralised people, revolution was in the air. Tsar Nicholas II was forced to abdicate, and with the aid of Germany, Bolshevik leader Lenin returned to Russia. With the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russia withdrew from the war in March 1918, dealing a blow to the Allies.

However, the shrinking number of Allied soldiers was to get a boost. Initially the United States had maintained neutrality at the outbreak of war, however its economic and diplomatic interests were soon drawn into the conflict. German submarine attacks on US merchant ships, in addition to the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915, which killed 128 Americans, fuelled the increasingly loud calls for intervention. The final straw came when a leaked telegram between Germany and Mexico revealed a ploy for Germany aiding in a Mexican invasion of the USA. On 6 April 1917 the USA declared war and soon millions of American soldiers were crossing the Atlantic to aid the Allies.

As the war raged on, the tide began to turn against the Central Powers. An Allied blockade led to severe shortages in Germany, further worsened by poor harvests and political unrest, inspired by the Bolshevik's successful revolution in Russia. After a decisive Italian victory at Vittorio Veneto, Austria-Hungary finally agreed to peace on 4 November 1918. Meanwhile, the unrest in Germany and the loss of military support eventually forced Wilhelm II to abdicate, and on 11 November 1918, in a railway carriage near Compiègne, the Armistice was signed. The war to end all wars was over.

The Treaty of Versailles, which was signed the following year, laid out the terms of peace between the warring nations. It held Germany solely responsible, demanding harsh reparations and territorial losses. The economical costs were extremely high, with Germany agreeing to pay £6.6 billion in full reparations. Germany also lost Alsace-Lorraine to France and its military capability was severely restricted.

The war caused extensive damage across Europe and there wasn't a corner that wasn't affected. The human cost was staggering – more than 10 million military deaths and 21 million wounded, while more than 8 million civilians lost their lives. France lost vast swathes of farmland and Europe's economy was in ruins, with estimates of the financial cost going into the hundreds of billions.

The war's consequences were profound. Germany was reduced in size, Austria and Hungary dissolved into separate countries and the Russian Empire disintegrated. This enabled new countries to emerge, including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Finland, Poland and Ukraine. The Republic of Ireland also began its road to breaking from Britain.

As the years went on, the penalties laid at the door of Germany were starting to be viewed as being particularly harsh. This discontent and injustice felt by the German people was exploited and fuelled the rise of the Nazi party, eventually leading Germany down the road to World War II.

Images: Getty Images; Alamy

1917-1922

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Discover how a morning's work in October 1917 changed the landscape of Europe forever

Written by Mark Dolan

The Russian Revolution is actually two revolutions, separated by just a few months in 1917. For the previous 300 years, the Romanov dynasty had ruled Russia, with Tsar Nicholas II in power in 1917, having narrowly escaped the 1905 Revolution with his power (albeit less secure) still intact. This rocky period for the Tsar had not improved with Russia's ill-fated entry into WWI in 1914. Germany had militarised to a huge degree, and its strength could not be matched by tsarist Russia, whose military was far behind the other European powers'.

The ill-equipped Russian army suffered defeat after defeat, while Germany and its allies blockaded Russia's trade imports, on which it was heavily reliant, leading to huge strains across the country with food and other supplies dangerously low. In 1915, Russia's repeated losses spurred Nicholas II to make a hubristic error, as he decided to take direct control of the army himself. He believed he could raise morale and lead Russia to an historic victory, but his incapability as a military leader soon showed. The situation got worse, the mood towards the Tsar darkened further, and Nicholas was seen as personally responsible for the failings. The situation led to growing unrest, and people began to unionise and strike, demanding better provisions, an end to war, and government reform.

In March 1917, the February Revolution (so called as Russia used the Julian calendar, according to which it was February) broke out. On 8 March, a widespread strike began, starting with metal workers, but quickly grew until over 200,000 people were on the streets of Petrograd demanding the removal of the Tsar and the end of Russian involvement in the war. Nicholas' reaction was to send troops to forcibly quell the protests, but large parts of his army mutinied and sided with the protestors. Out of options, Nicholas finally abdicated the throne, to be replaced by a Provisional Government made up of moderate revolutionaries, including the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries.

> The Romanov family, including Tsar Nicholas II, and their entourage, were executed by the Bolsheviks in July 1918

Initial optimism led to a number of political exiles returning to Russia, including both Vladimir Lenin and Leo Trotsky, but hopes were soon dashed, as little improvement was made by the new government. The weak and divided committee government was unable to prevent continued food shortages or rampant unemployment, nor did they end Russia's involvement in the war. By July, resentment had grown and protests were once again breaking out on the streets of the capital. Having seemingly learned no lessons from the situation earlier in the year, the Provisional Government again responded with force, killing hundreds of protestors.

The weakness and inneffectiveness of the Provisional Government in dealing with Russia's problems laid the ground for a second revolution, this time led by Lenin's Bolsheviks, whose slogan 'Peace, Bread and Land' summed up the desires of the majority of the Russian population. Lenin's powerful public speaking and Trotsky's political nous helped to win the Bolsheviks widespread support in the weeks leading up to the revolution.

On the morning of 7 November (25 October on the Russian calendar), Lenin's Red Guards occupied buildings around Petrograd, surrounded the Winter Palace and entered it in droves, leading to the surrender of the Provisional Government in an almost bloodless coup.

Lenin was immediately installed as the government's new leader, and the Bolsheviks set up the communist regime that would lead Russia throughout the 20th century. It was not long after the revolution that Russia entered into negotiations with Germany, signing the Brest-Litovsk treaty in March 1918 and thereby withdrawing from WWI. The successful takeover of power sent shockwaves through Europe, with monarchies seeing the Romanovs' downfall and fearing for their own institutions. Other countries had short-lived revolutions, however some countries, notably Yugoslavia, but also various others including Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, became communist nations over the next couple of decades.

Lenin was succeeded by Joseph Stalin in 1924, who had risen through the ranks of the Communist Party in the first few years after the revolution. Stalin would go on to conduct one of the bloodiest regimes Europe has ever seen, and was pivotal in the outcome of WWII, the often forceful spread of communism, the division of Germany, and the creation of the Iron Curtain. The communist ideology would go on to underpin the Cold War and shape European history throughout the 20th century. The impact of the Russian Revolution reverberated throughout Europe for decades, being undoubtedly one of the most impactful events in modern European history.

Nicholas II, the last tsar of Russia

Lenin, leader of the October Revolution, giving a speech to the Russian public

Images: Getty Images

1939-1945

THE DEADLIEST WAR IN HISTORY

Hitler's rapacious desire for land plunged Europe into war in September 1939. It would end with millions dead and the world irreversibly transformed

Written by Bee Ginger

Unlike the Great War of 1914-18, a conflict Europe had stumbled blindly into through a series of remarkable missteps, the warning signs pointing towards World War II were flashing red long before Adolf Hitler unleashed the might of Nazi Germany's war machine to invade Poland on 1 September 1939.

From his remilitarisation of Germany in flagrant violation of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles (itself an integral part in planting the seeds of WWII) to threatening war if the Sudetenland was not ceded to Germany by Czechoslovakia, Hitler could not have been accused of keeping his imperial ambitions secret. Yet it is only through the lens of history that British prime minister Neville Chamberlain's claim to have achieved "peace in our time" at the Munich Conference of 1938 can be viewed as the grave misjudgment it truly was - one that spelled tragedy for Europe and beyond.

London was bombed for 57 consecutive nights in 1940, forcing up to 180,000 people to shelter in the underground

By the summer of 1941, the Third Reich had brought most of Europe to its knees. Beginning in Poland, the Wehrmacht (German army) had brutally utilised blitzkrieg ('lightning war') tactics in order to achieve stunning victories in Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, France, Yugoslavia and Greece. Even though the Luftwaffe (German airforce) had failed to defeat an obstinate Britain in the skies in what became known as the Battle of Britain, Hitler's forces seemed unbeatable. Already waging a devastating submarine campaign in the Atlantic that threatened Britain with starvation, and with Erwin Rommel leading the Afrika Korps to a string of triumphs in Africa, Nazi high command confidently assumed that the war was almost won. But then came the turning point of the entire conflict.

On 22 June 1941, Hitler triggered Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, an ally with whom Germany had signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in August 1939. Keen to avoid a war on two fronts at the time, Hitler had been willing to make a deal with Stalin despite harbouring dreams of one day conquering the east. It had served Germany well, with the Soviets aiding in the invasion and dissection of Poland in 1939. But the time had now come for the clash Hitler had written about all the way back in 1925 when he'd published *Mein Kampf* ('My Struggle'). When referring to the lebensraum ('living space') that he was adamant Germany required if she was to survive, Hitler wrote, "If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her border states".

Caught completely off guard, despite repeated warnings of an imminent German invasion sent from a Soviet agent operating within the German embassy in Tokyo, Stalin fell into a catatonic state as the Wehrmacht scythed through the USSR. Such was the extent of the Werhmacht's territorial gains that on 3 July, Franz Halder, chief of the army's general staff, wrote in his diary, "It's really not saying too much if I claim that the campaign against Russia has been won in 14 days". How wrong he was. The city of Stalingrad would prove to be a battleground too far for the Germans. Situated on the banks of the Volga, the

Illustration: Joe Cummings

Germans assaulted Stalingrad in July 1942, and at one stage they had captured 90 per cent of its buildings. But the Soviets refused to yield, fighting on tenaciously, and in February of the following year they encircled the entire German Sixth Army, simultaneously cutting off any chance of Hitler conquering the USSR.

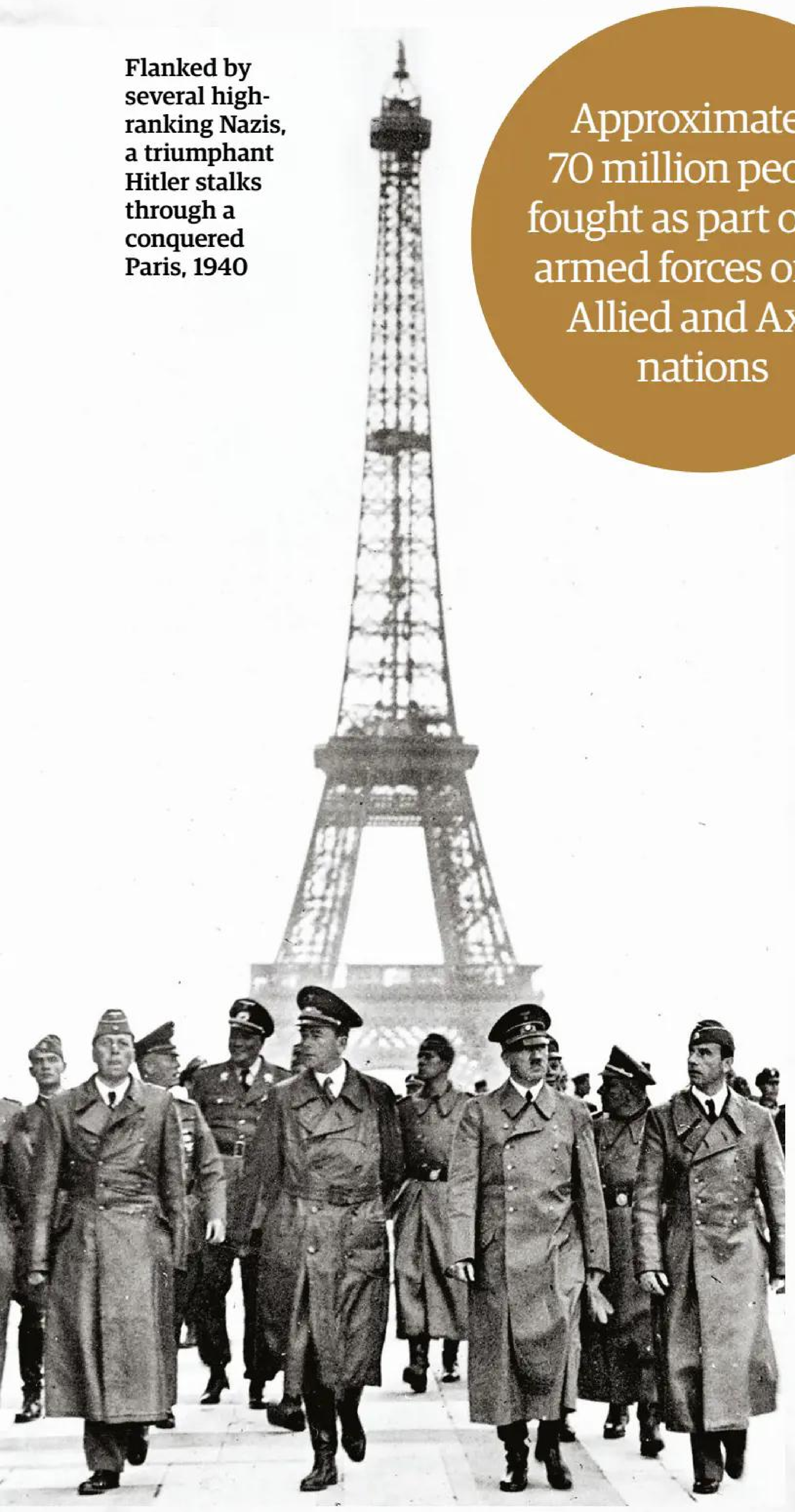
As the Soviets began their gruelling march towards Berlin, a second blow was delivered to Germany's prospects of winning the war on 6 June 1944 in the form of the D-Day landings in Normandy, France. Now confronted with US, Canadian and British forces surging towards Paris in the west as the Soviets cut their way ever closer to the heart of the Reich, Germany's fate was sealed. On 30 April 1945, as Red Army troops prepared to storm Berlin, Hitler shot himself inside his bunker beneath the city. By 9 May, Germany had surrendered to the Allies in the west and the Soviets in the wast. The war in Europe was over.

While the exact human and economic toll of the worst conflict in history is immeasurable, researchers have made several attempts to hone in on an approximate estimate of the horrifying costs of the war in Europe. The most haunting figure of all is the 15-20 million lives lost on the continent. It is thought that 4.5 million perished on the Eastern Front, which was the bloodiest theatre of the war. Elsewhere in the east, Poland suffered 5.8 million deaths, equivalent to around 20 per cent of its pre-war population. During their reign of terror over occupied Poland (whose capital, Warsaw, was turned into a ghetto inside of which 80,000 people died) the Nazis erected a series of concentration camps that would in time claim over 6 million lives, the majority of their victims being Jews.

As for the west, 70,000 civilians were killed in Britain, most by the German bombing raids known as the Blitz, and France lost over half a million people, 300,000 of them civilians. Total German deaths, including military personnel and civilians, are estimated to be between 6.6-8.8 million.

Vast swathes of Europe were razed to the ground during WWII. It is believed that the centre of 70 per cent of Europe's largest cities was destroyed, predominantly by bombing. Warsaw suffered even more damage, losing 80-90 per cent of its buildings, while in Germany, cities such as Dresden and Dusseldorf were rendered cratered ruins by Allied raids. In the Netherlands, the city of Rotterdam alone lost 25,000 homes in a ruthless Luftwaffe attack, and the Blitz reduced 30 per cent of the homes in Britain to charred splinters. The result of this unparalleled destruction was the displacement of 11 million people in Europe. Among these lost souls were 6 million labourers in Germany that had been forced to toil as slaves for the Third Reich. Adjusted for inflation, the financial cost of the war was in excess of $4 trillion. Across Europe, economies were left saddled with colossal debt (in Britain debt stood at over 200 per cent of GDP by the war's end) or, as in Germany's case, crippled. The question of how it would recover and rebuild was answered in part by the Marshall Plan.

Approximately 70 million people fought as part of the armed forces of the Allied and Axis nations


Flanked by several high-ranking Nazis, a triumphant Hitler stalks through a conquered Paris, 1940

First put forward in 1947 by US Secretary of State George Marshall, the plan entailed the US (whose economy almost doubled during the conflict) providing Western Europe with $13.3 billion with which to start rebuilding its infrastructure. The plan was connected to the Bretton Woods monetary system, which had been established at a meeting of 44 nations in New Hampshire, US, in 1944. This meeting not only resulted in the founding of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, but it also established the US dollar as the world's reserve currency, further enhancing US influence at a time when it was flexing its muscle as the West's premier military force. The fact that the UN (on 24 October 1945) and NATO (in April 1949) were both later founded on US soil was further testament to a major shift in the global balance of power.

While the latter was formed in a bid to deter Soviet aggression, the former was a concerted effort to bring the global community together, replacing the largely ineffectual League of Nations with a political organisation that would strive to maintain peace. Fifty countries signed the UN Charter at a conference in San Francisco on 26 June 1945, and in October the UN was officially born. Among its founding members were the US, Britain, France, China and the USSR, the five of which comprised the permanent members of the UN Security Council. However, this admirable attempt at international collaboration did not mean that all was well between the countries involved.

Stretching from the snow-blasted tundras of Siberia all the way to the newly-formed Eastern Germany, the USSR's expansion during WWII had firmly established it as a geopolitical superpower,

German troops man a field gun during the Battle of Stalingrad. The bloodiest battle in history, Stalingrad claimed over 1 million lives and broke the back of the Wehrmacht

NOT OUR FIGHT

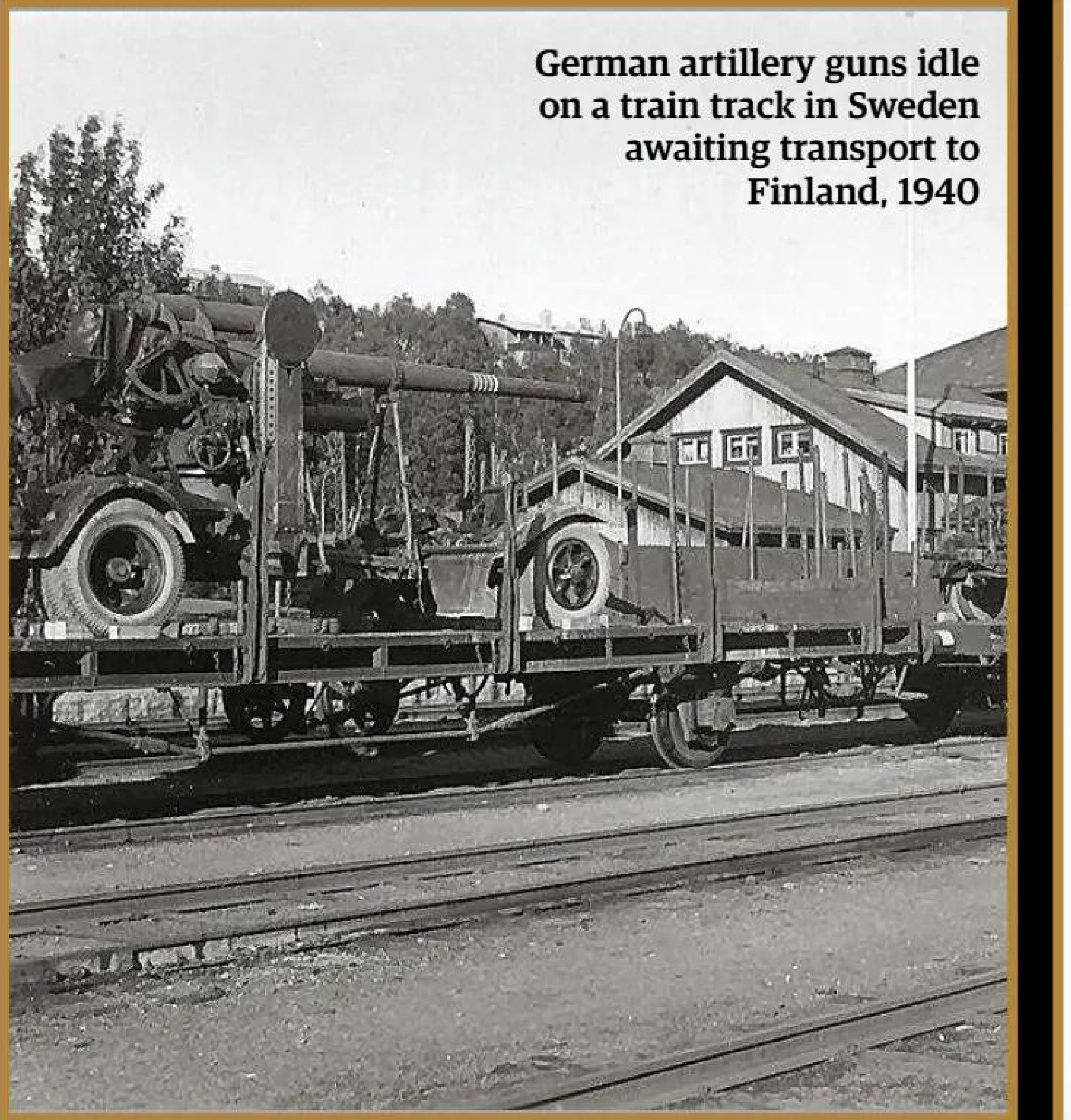
A host of European nations refused to pick sides in the war against Nazi Germany

The maelstrom of WWII swept over 50 countries into the chaos, but some managed to avoid being summoned to battle. In Europe, 14 nations remained officially neutral throughout the conflict, including Ireland, Spain (even though it was ruled by the fascist dictator, Francisco Franco), Switzerland, Portugal and Sweden. However, despite being 'neutral', that wasn't to say that some of these countries didn't still have a role to play.

For example, Portugal permitted the Allies to use its naval bases and airfields in the Azores. This proved pivotal in the Battle of the Atlantic as the Allies could launch planes to protect its convoys from German U-boats as they crossed the ocean.

Germany was not without 'neutral' help either. Sweden continued to sell iron ore to the Third Reich throughout the war, and it also allowed German companies to base themselves on Swedish soil. Its military even escorted German vessels across the Baltic Sea. Perhaps most important to the German war effort in Scandinavia was the transit agreement it signed with the Swedes, enabling German troops to cross through Sweden from Norway to Finland.

Sweden did also grant the Allies the use of its airbases later on in the war, an act that didn't spare it from Winston Churchill lambasting the country for having "ignored the greater moral issues of the war and played both sides for profit".



German artillery guns idle on a train track in Sweden awaiting transport to Finland, 1940

one equipped with vast oil and gas reserves and an appetite to spread communism as far as possible. Ideologically opposed to the US, its ally during the fight against fascism, this monolith state held sway over Eastern Europe once the guns fell silent, largely severing it from its Western neighbours, who the Soviets eyed with suspicion from behind the Iron Curtain. In time the mutual distrust between the US and the USSR would take the world to the brink of nuclear annihilation as the Cold War threatened to become all too hot.

The geopolitical ramifications of WWII rippled across the globe. Once sprawling colonial powers, France and Britain were forced to relinquish their grip on overseas territories including Indochina and India respectively. Both tried in vain to cling on in Africa, but the financial costs of maintaining colonies became impossible to sustain as Europe grappled with stark economic realities.

In a similar spirit of friendship and cooperation present at the founding of the UN, on 18 April 1951, France, Germany, Italy and the Low Countries signed the Treaty of Paris, thereby establishing the European Coal and Steel Community in an effort to stave off future conflicts by connecting two key industries required to fuel a war. This new political entity was a precursor to the European Economic Community and ultimately the European Union, which to date continues to play a vital role in mediating relations between the continent's states and has a strong claim to overseeing a previously unimaginable spell of peace and prosperity in Europe. Out of the ashes of war a new world was formed, one dominated by the might of the US and the USSR. For its part, Europe would have to navigate a dramatically transformed geopolitical landscape with care while working to re-establish the peace Hitler had so violently shattered. Further challenges still lay ahead as the continent felt its way out of the darkness and towards the light.

American soldiers stand beside a dead German in the devastated village of Blatzheim, Germany, 6 March 1945

Images: Getty Images, Boxout: U4031722

1933-1945

THE HOLOCAUST

Conducted across continental Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, the Holocaust saw the murder of tens of millions of people by the Nazis

Written by Tom Garner

Known as the Shoah in Hebrew, the Holocaust was an attempt by the Nazis and their collaborators to murder the entire Jewish population of Europe. The resulting genocide led to the deaths of approximately six million Jews. An additional 11 million were also murdered from other persecuted groups.

The Nazis enforced this horrendous policy based on prejudices involving ethnicity, religion, politics, sexual orientation and health. The Holocaust was unique in its horrific nature and is recognised as the ultimate symbol of humanity's capacity for evil.

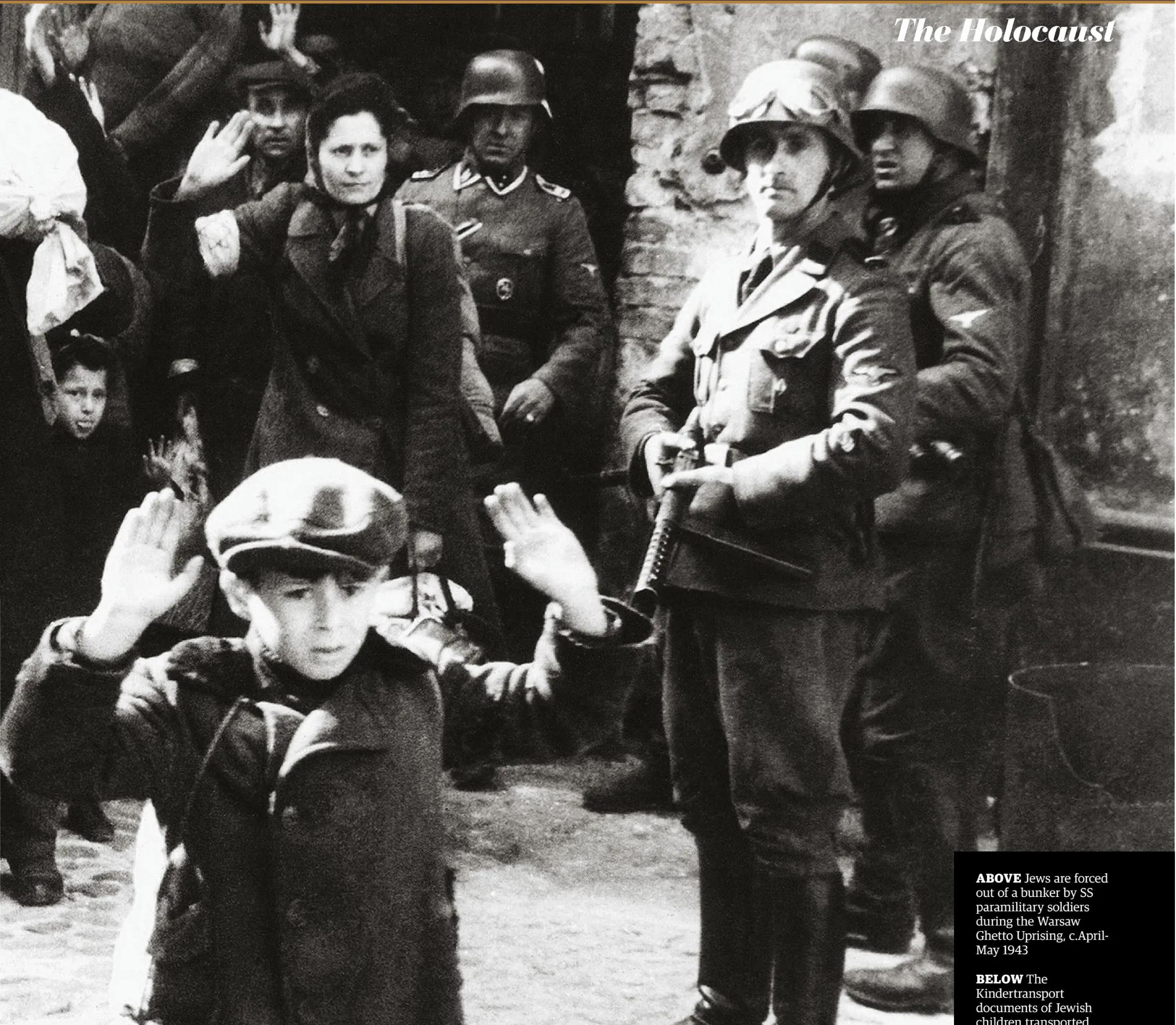
The origins of the Holocaust were rooted in thousands of years of discrimination against the Jews, coupled with the rapid rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. Although Jews had lived in Europe for almost 2,000 years before the 20th century, relationships with their mostly Christian neighbours were often deeply troubled.

Antisemitism (prejudice against Jewish people) grew from the Christian belief that the Jews were responsible for killing Jesus Christ. This hostile theology fuelled persecution, from Crusades-era massacres to violent riots (known as 'pogroms') against Jewish communities in the Russian Empire during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Nevertheless, many Jews thrived across Europe (including in Germany) as successful businessmen and intellectuals. Their relative prosperity fuelled additional antisemitism that was often based on material jealousy and a mistaken belief that Jews were political manipulators bent on overthrowing nominally Christian regimes.

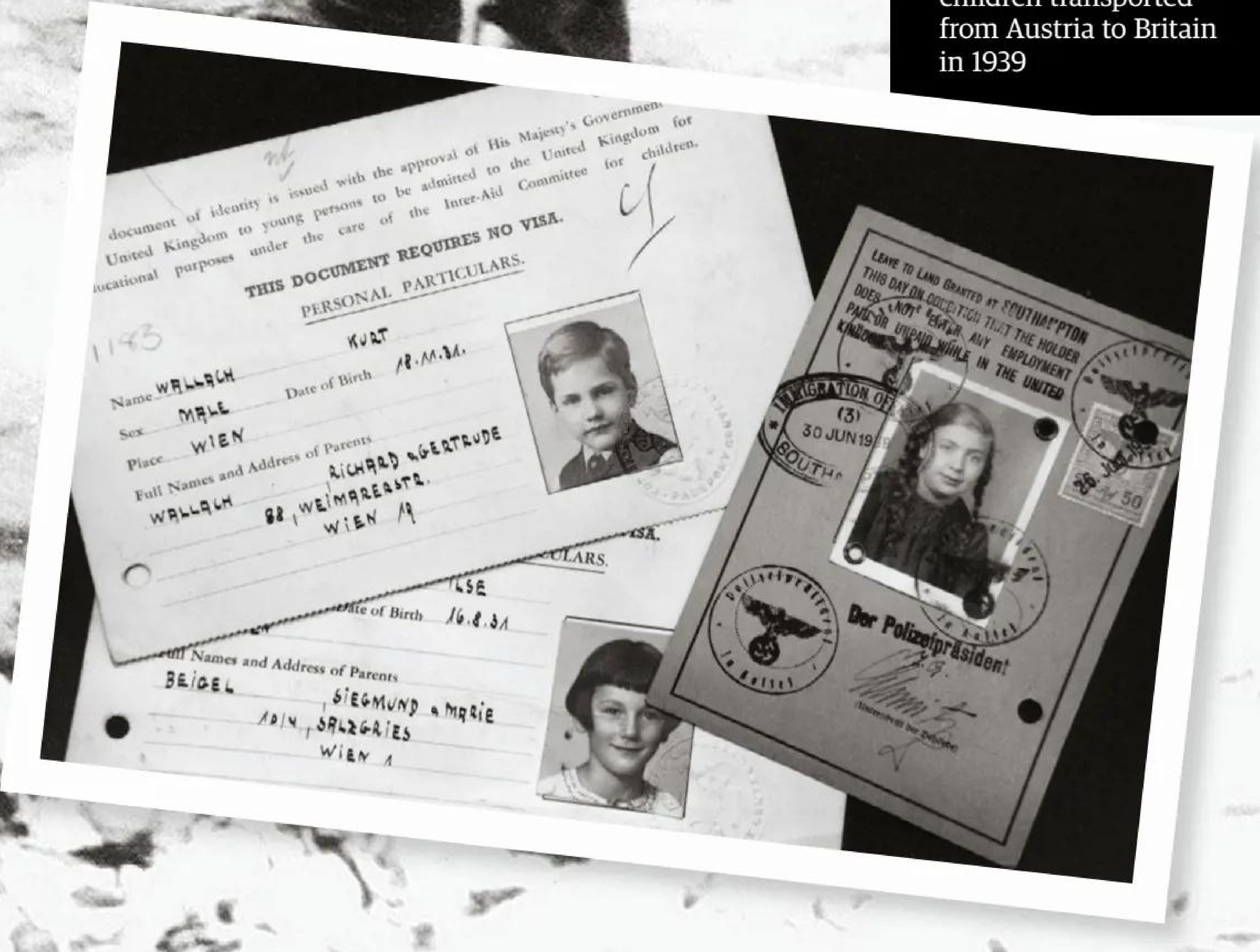
In Germany, antisemitism was already pretty widespread but overt persecution of the Jews did not begin until the leader of the far-right Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler, was elected as chancellor in 1933. Hitler and his associates blamed Germany's recent defeat during WWI on a conspiracy between communists and Jews. This conspiracy was false but the Nazis used it to push their extremist ideas on eugenics and 'race theory'. This aimed to prove that Jews were racially inferior to 'Aryans'. These were defined as primarily Germanic and Northern European people, known by the Nazis as the 'Master Race'.

The Nazis were also expansionist and wanted to create Lebensraum ('Living Space') for Aryans in Eastern Europe. Non-Aryans who already lived in these territories, such as Jews or Slavs, would simply be displaced. Once the Nazis came to power, these nightmarish policies began to be swiftly implemented.



ABOVE Jews are forced out of a bunker by SS paramilitary soldiers during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, c.April-May 1943

BELOW The Kindertransport documents of Jewish children transported from Austria to Britain in 1939



document of identity is issued with the approval of His Majesty's Governmen
United Kingdom to young persons to be admitted to the United Kingdom for
ucational purposes under the care of the Inter-Aid Committee for children.

THIS DOCUMENT REQUIRES NO VISA.

PERSONAL PARTICULARS.

1183

Name WALLACH KURT Date of Birth 18.11.31.

Sex MALE

Place WIEN

Full Names and Address of Parents RICHARD & GERTRUDE WALLACH 88, WEIMARERSTR. WIEN 19

ate of Birth 16.8.31

ull Names and Address of Parents BEIGEL SIEGMUND & MARIE 1014, SALZGRIES WIEN 1

LEAVE TO LAND GRANTED AT SOUTHAMPTON THIS DAY ON CONDITION THAT THE HOLDER DOES NOT ENTER ANY EMPLOYMENT PAID OR UNPAID WHILE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

IMMIGRATION OF (3) 30 JUN 19

Der Polizeipräsident

Images: Getty Images; Alamy

LEFT A British soldier talks to a survivor of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp shortly after its liberation in April 1945

BELOW Reinhard Heydrich was a high-ranking SS official in the Nazi Party who is considered to be one of the chief architects of the Holocaust

In fact, it was only two months after the Nazis came to power that they established their first concentration camp at Dachau in Bavaria. It initially held political opponents, such as communists and trade unionists, but it wasn't long before Jews were also imprisoned there.

In September 1935, the Nazis introduced the Nuremberg Laws. These officially began the persecution of Jews in Germany. Jewish political and civil rights were removed and a significant turning point occurred on 9 November 1938, when the Nazis authorised pogroms against Jews across Germany. Known as Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass), this event saw almost 100 Jews murdered in violent riots, 267 synagogues and Jewish businesses destroyed and an additional 30,000 Jews being arrested and imprisoned in newly established concentration camps.

Kristallnacht is generally considered the beginning of the Holocaust and it prompted many Jews to leave Germany as well as Nazi-annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia. This included thousands of Jewish children who were evacuated to countries like Britain in rescue convoys known as the Kindertransport.

The Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939, which then prompted the outbreak of WWII. The ensuing war dramatically increased the scope and horror of the Holocaust because the Nazis defeated and occupied countries across Europe. This included France, the Low Countries, Norway, Denmark and Greece.

Across occupied Europe, the Nazis forcibly moved Jews into crowded ghettos. Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David badge for identification and were deprived of food and utilities. Conditions were appalling, with the largest ghetto in Warsaw containing 400,000 Jews within just 2.5 square kilometres (1.3 square miles). There was an average of 7.2 people per room.

In June 1941, Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union with the Nazis now overseeing the killing of Jews on an industrial scale. The Eastern Front provided an opportunity for mobile paramilitary SS death squads (known as the Einsatzgruppen) to round up Jews and murder them in mass shootings in countries like Russia, Belarus, Ukraine and the Baltic States. The most infamous atrocity occurred outside Kyiv at Babi Yar in September 1941 when 33,000 Jews were killed. Babi Yar was also the site of killings (roughly 100,000) of other groups, such as Soviet POWs, Roma people and civilians.

The Einsatzgruppen ultimately killed over one million Jews, including 200,000 in Lithuania alone. However, they did not act in isolation because throughout occupied Europe, the Nazis found willing collaborators to assist in the killings. This included antisemitic nationalists such as the Arrow Cross Party in Hungary and paramilitary groups with similar aims elsewhere.

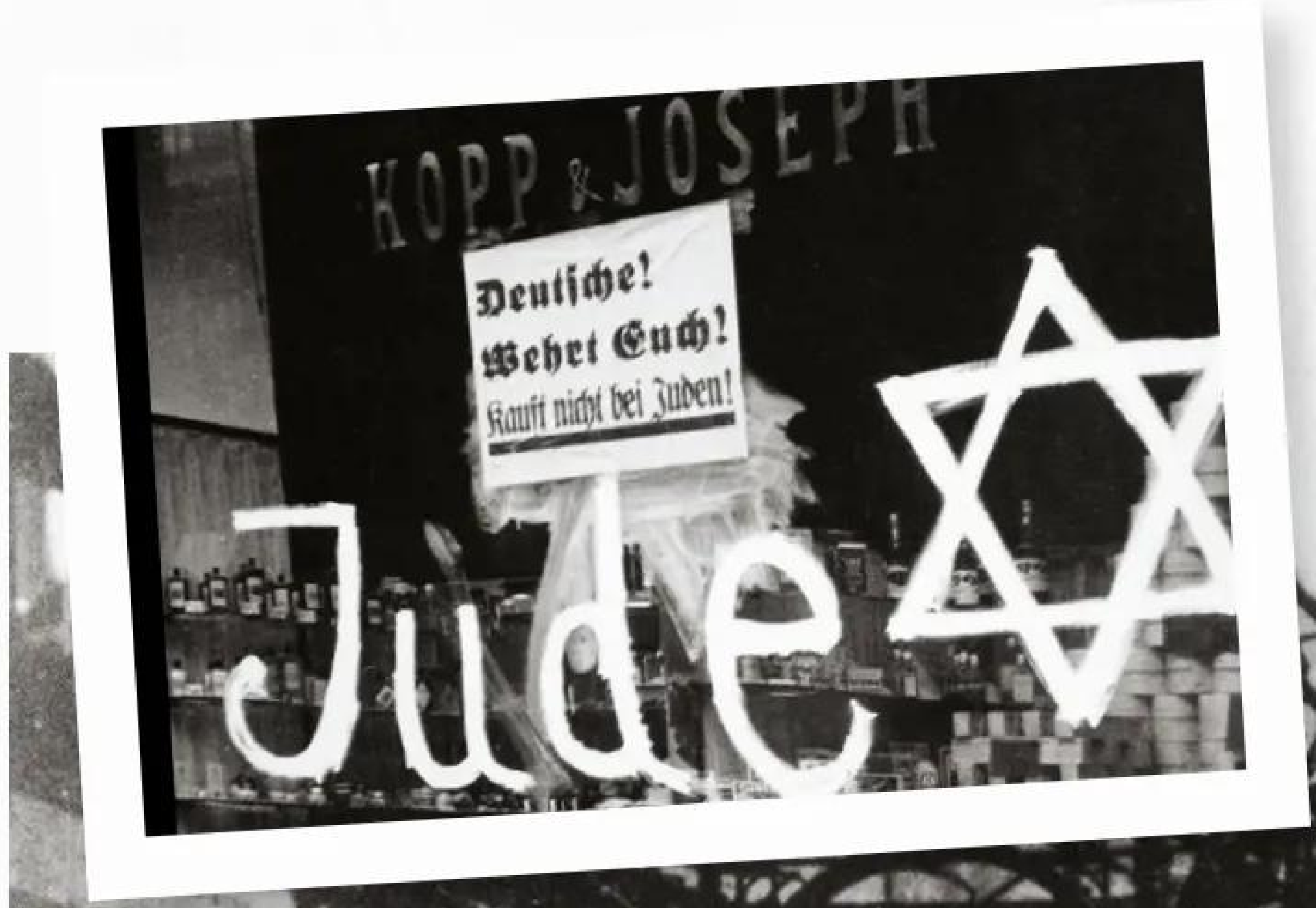
As the war progressed, the SS began experimenting with poison gas as a way to murder Jews and other people more 'efficiently'. The Einsatzgruppen began travelling in mobile 'gas vans', using carbon monoxide to kill people in Eastern Europe.

Taking inspiration from this method, high-ranking Nazis discussed the 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, January 1942. These officials, led by Reinhard Heydrich, compiled a list of Jews in Europe (numbering 11 million) with the aim of exterminating them. It was decided that Jews would be removed from their ghettos to six death camps in Poland, where they would be killed en masse in gas chambers using the cyanide-based Zyklon B pesticide.

The death camps were different to concentration camps in that they were exclusively designed to murder people. Their names have since become bywords for unspeakable evil: Belzec, Chełmo, Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka and – most notoriously – Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Auschwitz was the most infamous death camp. During 1940-45, it is estimated that 1.1 million people were murdered there, with 90 percent of the victims being Jews. Such is its notoriety that the internationally commemorated Holocaust Memorial Day is held annually on 27 January, the day Soviet troops liberated the camp. It should be noted that although Jews were the main target group murdered during the Holocaust, the genocide conducted by the Nazis included a wide range of other victims. Slavic people (including Poles, Russians and Ukrainians) were deemed inferior to Aryans with the Nazis killing 3.3 million combined Soviet POWs, 1.8 million Poles and 310,000 Serbs. Roma and Sinti peoples (then collectively known as

> *"The death camps were different to concentration camps in that they were exclusively designed to murder people. Their names have since become bywords for unspeakable evil"*



ABOVE A Jewish-owned shop vandalised by the Nazis in 1938 with a poster reading, "Germans Defend Yourselves - Don't Buy from Jews"

RIGHT The interior of a synagogue that was destroyed during Kristallnacht

'Gypsies') were placed in the same racial category as Jews with at least 250,000 being killed.

The Nazis first used poison gas on disabled people and they murdered 270,000 during 1939-45. Homosexual men were persecuted, with 10,000-15,000 dying in concentration camps. The Holocaust also had political victims. These included communists, captured resistance fighters, Italian partisans, freemasons and even Spanish Republicans who had escaped from Fascist Spain.

By 1944, the Nazis were losing the war in Europe. As Allied forces advanced towards Germany from both east and west, camps began to be liberated, with the first being Majdanek in July 1944.

As more camps were liberated, the Nazis attempted to cover up their crimes by destroying camps and mass graves. Many camp survivors were forced onto 'death marches' into Germany, which killed thousands. When the camps were liberated, Allied soldiers were horrified. They discovered many unburied bodies, widespread disease and malnourished survivors who often died shortly after liberation.

After the war ended, survivors attempted to rebuild their lives, with many emigrating to Allied countries. Meanwhile, the Holocaust prompted a revolution in the prosecution of war crimes. The Nuremberg Trials of 1945-46 saw 199 Nazi leaders and accomplices charged with crimes against humanity. There were 161 convictions, with 37 sentenced to death. The trials are now considered the foundation of modern international criminal law. Even in the 2020s, those who implemented the Holocaust - such as camp guards and staff - continue to be traced, arrested and put on trial.

One of the most significant consequences of the Holocaust was the acceleration of the foundation of Israel in 1948. In the short-term, this was partially due to the large migration of Holocaust survivors to Palestine after the war. However, the establishment of the world's only Jewish state led to bitter and almost continual conflict with Palestinians, which continues to this day.

With the death of approximately six million Jews, the Holocaust destroyed centuries of Jewish communities and culture in Europe. Its memory has largely energised the international community to remain vigilant about preventing genocide and its causes, and many survivors have shared their stories. However, the Holocaust will always be remembered as a dire warning from history, one that profoundly shapes the world we live in today.

LEFT Romani prisoners at Belzec in 1940. The Romani and Sinti Holocaust is known as the Porajmos (the 'Devouring')

RIGHT A member of the Einsatzgruppen executes a Jewish man above a mass grave

Images: Getty Images, Alamy

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As a US plane flies over a Soviet ship carrying missiles to Cuba, the two sides were in a race to prevent nuclear war

1947-1991

THE COLD WAR

In the wake of WWII, an Iron Curtain descended, and a new Cold War chilled the air

Written by Catherine Curzon

At the end of World War II, a new conflict emerged between the United States and the Soviet Union. This political and ideological conflict was fought through espionage, politics and propaganda. For more than half a century the two countries raced to outdo one another as the Cold War raged. With an arms race central to the conflict and a nuclear threat ever-present, the two sides engaged in proxy wars to destabilise and ultimately dominate the other.

After the war, Stalin wanted to expand the USSR's territory and power by absorbing the countries that his forces had helped to liberate and to seal off the Soviet Union from Europe. At the Potsdam Conference in 1945, some territories were given over to Soviet control, while the remainder were divided between the Western allies. This split Europe between east and west, eventually leading to extreme economic and social divisions.

With its territories confirmed, the Soviet Union began installing communist regimes across Eastern Europe. Several satellite states of the USSR were established, where Stalin forcibly suppressed any political opposition, then replaced the existing system with that of Stalinist Russia. Media and press were forced to comply with Soviet interests and the USSR took control of security forces and all facets of government and society; any attempt at dissent was silenced. In Western Europe, meanwhile, people looked on in horror from the comfort of their democratic, peacetime world. Many had envisioned a future of cooperation and plenty once the Nazi threat was vanquished but instead, life in the east seemed more oppressive than ever.

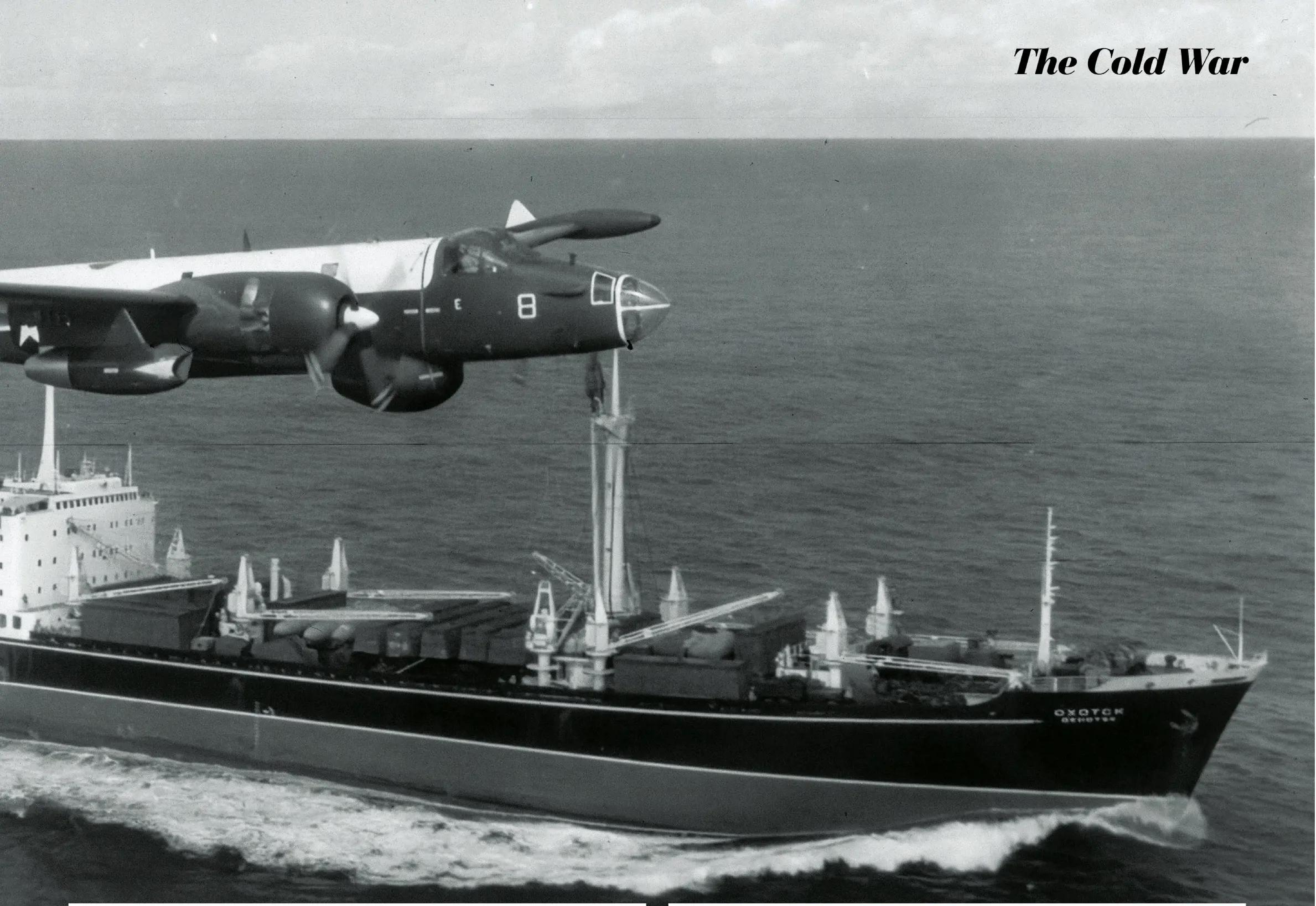
The US believed that the threat from Germany had been replaced by one from the USSR and that a united, rearmed and economically buoyant Europe was vital to defending against it. To ensure this, Secretary of State George Marshall drew up the Marshall Plan, which offered the capital and materials that war-ravaged Western Europe needed to rebuild. The Plan provided more than $13 billion over the next four years and created enduring trade and economic relationships between the US and Western Europe. Behind the Iron Curtain, however, there were no such opportunities, and the economies of the Soviet-controlled nations stagnated. With no access to the American cash that was flowing into the west, the east began to fall more and more behind as money was poured into military programmes at the cost of the lives of the people.

> NASA was created as a result of the Cold War - the US and the USSR were eager to beat each other in space exploration

However, as Stalin continued to test the west, President Truman believed that a more formal statement of defence was required. The Western European nations formed a military alliance to defend their interests against the USSR and, in 1949, signed the North Atlantic Treaty, officially creating NATO. In 1955 the Soviet Union and its satellite states answered with the Warsaw Pact, a counter to NATO that worked on the concept of collective security: if one member was attacked, all would come to its aid.

The nuclear arms race was the most worrying feature during the Cold War between the US and the USSR. Tensions reached boiling point in 1962 when the US discovered secret Soviet missile bases in Cuba. The Cuban Missile Crisis lasted for 13 days, as President Kennedy rejected pressure to invade Cuba, but instead ordered a naval blockade to prevent more missiles from reaching the bases. The standoff ended only when Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's successor, agreed to dismantle the installations in Cuba. In reply, the US secretly agreed to dismantle its own missile installations in Turkey. To this day, the Crisis is still considered to be the closest that the world has ever come to a nuclear exchange.

As the years passed, those behind the Iron Curtain longed for economic growth, for freedom of



BERLIN BAUT AUF
MIT HILFE DES MARSHALL-PLANS

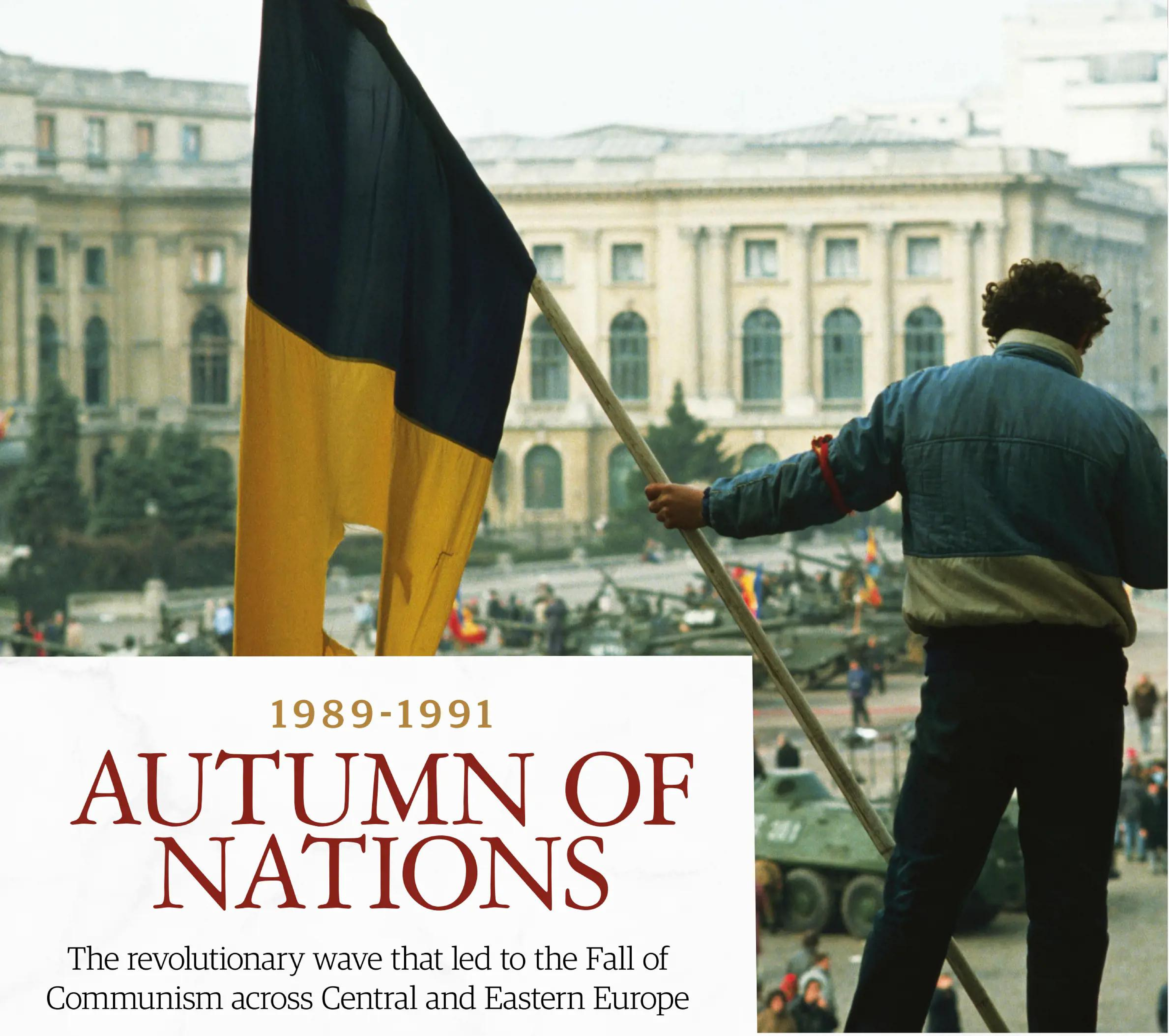
In Western Europe, the Marshall Plan poured a fortune into rebuilding; the east, meanwhile, had no such aid

When Gorbachev and Reagan met as friends, it signalled the end of the Cold War and the beginning of glasnost

movement and speech, for a free press and for the opportunities they saw in the west. Change began with the election of moderniser Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, who believed that his country could not survive without significant reform. Gorbachev instituted a policy of glasnost, or openness, embarking on summits with US president Ronald Reagan that sought to end the Cold War. When anti-communist revolutions swept through the Warsaw Pact countries in 1989, Gorbachev did not attempt military intervention. Though he had hoped to preserve the Soviet Union, his own efforts to ensure democracy hastened its fall after an unsuccessful communist coup in 1991. Gorbachev resigned the presidency soon after, and was so celebrated in the west as a reformer that he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

The legacy of the Cold War is considerable. It carved a continent in two and today, the countries that were under Soviet rule have not fully recovered socially and economically. Political instability and corruption persists in some of these countries, where people still desperately strive for democracy. As a result of the Cold War, the US became a hugely influential global leader and mistrust between governments became rife, leading to an increased focus on defence. With new threats emerging and fresh tensions between the east and west, there has even been talk of a new Cold War: only time will tell.

Images: Getty Images



1989-1991

AUTUMN OF NATIONS

The revolutionary wave that led to the Fall of Communism across Central and Eastern Europe

WHAT WAS IT?

Whether known as the Revolutions of 1989, the Fall of Nations or the Autumn of Nations, the two-year period that saw the dismantling of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe changed the face of the continent forever. It began in Poland when a rash of strikes broke out, led by workers who were demanding that the Communist authorities legalise their trade union, Solidarity. After intensive talks, Solidarity was recognised, and at the elections that followed, it swept parliament, capturing all but one of the Sejm's 100 seats. Faced with the political wipeout of the ruling regime, the Communists' political allies, the Democratic Party and the United People's Party, joined forces with Solidarity. His support gone and his administration in tatters, Prime Minister Czesław Kiszczak stepped down in favour of Tadeusz Mazowiecki, a supporter of democracy. Across the country, the statues and memorials to communism were pulled down. With little resistance from the Soviet Union, Poland dissolved the Warsaw Pact and moved towards a new future of democracy.

WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES?

With political triumph in Poland, across the communist strongholds of Central and Eastern Europe, people who had long been cut off from the rest of the world behind the Iron Curtain began to call for democracy. In 1989, demonstrations in Hungary led to the dismantling of the literal Iron Curtain, a vast fence that marked Hungary's border with Austria. With freedom open to them, Hungarians flocked illegally into the West in their droves. Thousands of East Germans followed, and after the border was closed, East Germans protested in Leipzig ,despite running the risk of meeting with harsh government reprisals. Though authorities met them with violence, the people wouldn't be silenced and soon, 9,000 protesters had swelled to a crowd of 300,000. They couldn't be ignored. When the iconic Berlin Wall, long asymbol of the divide between East and West, fell, it marked the beginning of the end for the communist powers and at the ballot box, they faced defeat. The Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991, bringing the once-impenetrable Iron Curtain down with it.

YOU ARE LEAVING
THE AMERICAN SECTOR
Friedrichstr
Zimmerstraße

When the Berlin Wall fell, Checkpoint Charlie was no longer a place to be feared, but a tourist destination

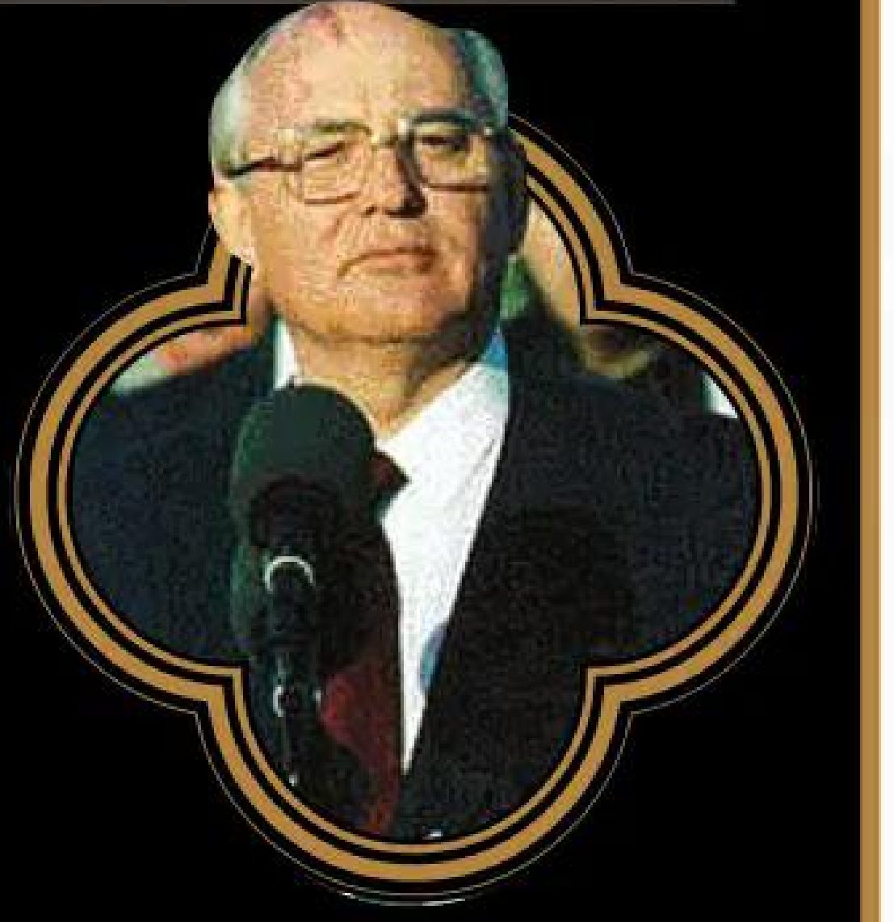
Tired of the daily hardships of life under communist rule, the people of Poland wanted democracy

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Lech Wałęsa

1943 - present

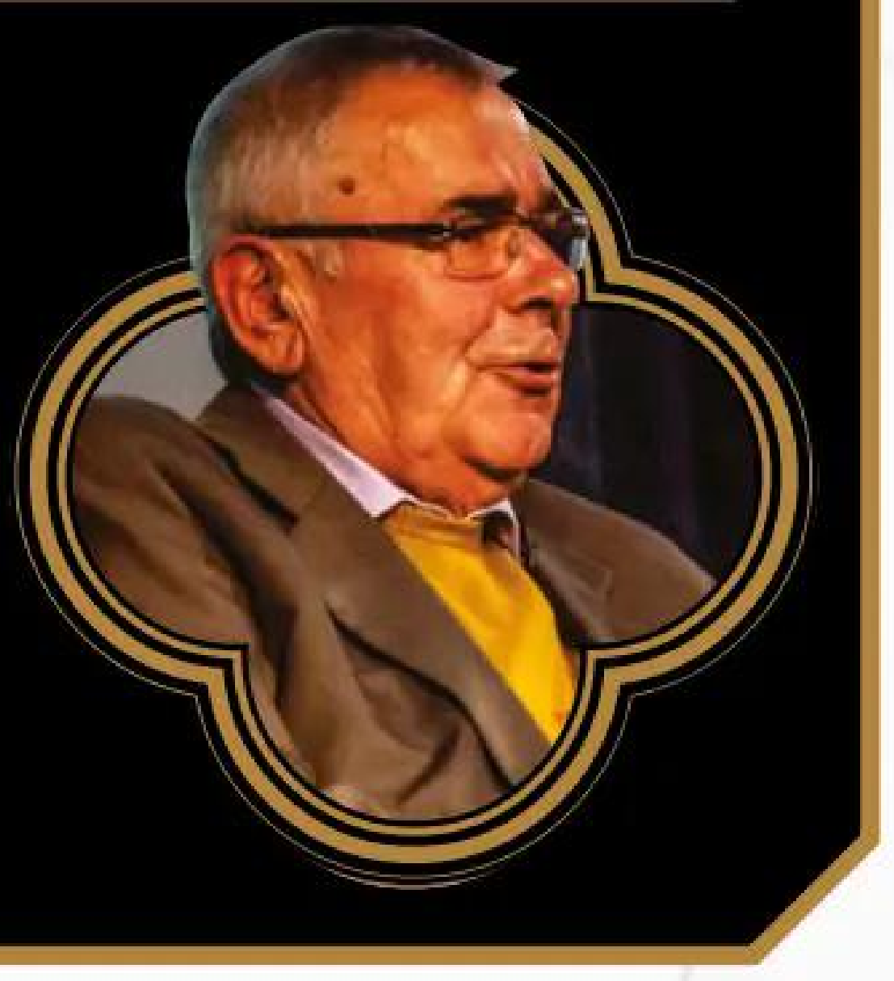
In 1990, Lech Wałęsa, the leader of Solidarity, was elected president of Poland and oversaw its transition from communism to democracy.



Mikhail Gorbachev

1931 - present

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev presided over the swift unravelling of the once seemingly all-powerful Soviet Union.



Harald Jäger

1943 - present

Lieutenant Colonel Harald Jäger was in charge of Berlin Wall passport control. On 9 November 1989, he opened the crossing.

TIMELINE

STOCZNIA GDAŃSKA
im. LENINA

START OF TALKS

31 AUGUST 1988

Lech Wałęsa, the leader of Solidarity, who had previously been imprisoned, is invited to talks with Communist authorities in Warsaw.

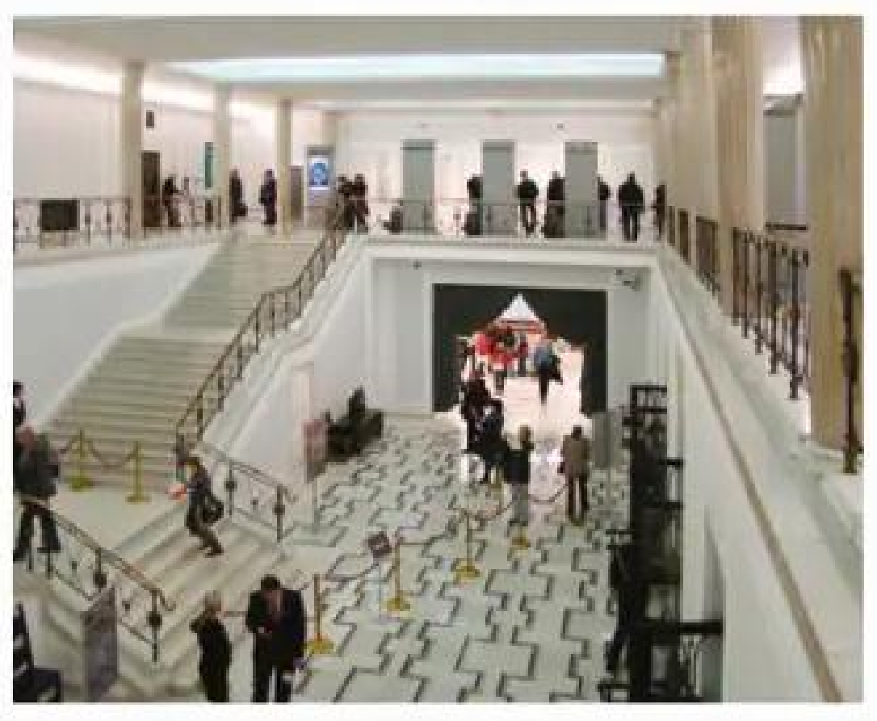
• European Solidarity Centre.

IN AGREEMENT

6 FEBRUARY 1989

The Round Table Agreement is signed. This legalises Solidarity and puts in place plans for partly free elections in Poland.

• Adrian Grycuk.



CLEAR WINNER

4 JUNE 1989

Solidarity wins at the polls by a landslide, claiming 99 out of 100 seats. One seat is won by an independent electoral candidate.

• Szczebrzeszynski.

FREE TO FLEE

2 MAY 1989

Hungary begins dismantling its border with Austria, allowing thousands of people to flee communist regimes in Czechoslovakia.

• Cuchulainn, 20. Jun. 2009.

„Ruinenstadt"
Leipzig
sofort alle
Bauarbeiter zurück

UNDETERRED

23 OCTOBER 1989

300,000 pro-democracy protesters gather in Leipzig despite threats of violent retaliation. They call for open borders and freedom.

• Bundesarchiv.

THE WALL FALLS

9 NOVEMBER 1989

Harald Jäger disobeys orders and opens the crossing point on the Berlin Wall. The fall of the Berlin Wall begins.

• Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1989-1110-018 / Oberst, Klaus.

Images: Getty Images, Wikipedia

1989

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

Discover more about the fall of the Berlin Wall with this captivating eyewitness account from Andreas Ramos

Written by Dom Reseigh-Lincoln

For 28 years, the Berlin Wall stood resolute, an imposing symbol of the Soviet Union's cast-iron hold over much of Eastern Europe. For almost three decades, the citizens of the Wall's Eastern side lived under the watchful eye of the German Democratic Republic, a semi-autonomous government laid in place by its Soviet masters in Moscow. Heavily guarded and laced with barbed wire, the 155-kilometre (96-mile)-long, 3.6-metre (11.8-foot)-high structure ensured the German capital remained divided through the fearful years of the Cold War. No East German was permitted to cross the border into the West; the sights and sounds of a free Berlin a few hundred yards away a constant reminder of how fractured Europe had become in the decades following the end of World War II. But as the 1980s drew to a close, this symbol of division became the breaking point in European socialism. Based in Denmark at the time, science and technology student Andreas Ramos travelled to Berlin to witness first-hand the frustrations of a continent boil over in the streets of a divided city.

"When I went to study at Heidelberg (in southwest Germany) in 1978 no one in government, academia or the general public could imagine the Berlin Wall would ever fall or the Soviet Union could collapse", explains Ramos. "NATO was built on the premise of eternal conflict with the USSR. But by the mid-1980s, after the USSR's failure in Afghanistan, it was clear the Soviet Union had to change. But collapse? They simply hadn't planned for change. It all happened on the streets, not within the government. I was in Germany for seven years and then went to Denmark to work on a doctoral dissertation. I'd been to Berlin many times and had friends there. From the edge of the Wall we watched everything, and when the East Germans began to tear down the wall, we joined them."

A month prior, the first metaphorical cracks in the Soviet Union's hold on Eastern Europe started to show. Communication between Moscow and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) government led by hardline party leader Erich Honecker had broken down as the Motherland struggled to contain its rapidly unravelling vision for a united socialist future. Up until this point, the borders of the Eastern Bloc remained intact, but the growing pressure from refugees attempting to flee the failing communist system became too much for the neighbouring Hungarian government to ignore. On 19 August 1989, Hungary effectively opened its physical borders and allowed over 13,000 East Germans to surge across the border into Austria. As the refugees sought sanctuary in the West German embassy, it sent a shockwave through the infrastructure of the Eastern Bloc; a wave that would reach all the way to Berlin and beyond.

Back in the capital, the streets were more alive than ever. A previously morose and subdued city was now bustling as its citizens took up arms in peaceful protests. East Berliners could sense the government was starting to unravel. The resignation of Erich Honecker, the staunch idealist who had stated only months before that the Berlin Wall would stand tall for a century to come, had galvanised the nation's hope for change. The 'Peaceful Revolution', as it came to be known, reached its height on 4 November 1989, an event that attracted Ramos and many others to Berlin. Arriving on the afternoon of 9 November, Ramos could sense an air of tension, but also one of burgeoning hope. "The build-up wasn't just in Germany; it was the whole year of revolutions across Eastern Europe. The Soviet Bloc was disintegrating, one nation after another", comments Ramos. "As we made our way into West Germany we could all sense that the whole continent was about to change forever."

At least 140 people were killed or died at the Wall in connection with the GDR border regime between 1961-1989

That evening the inevitable finally became a reality. In the weeks since Honecker's forced resignation, his successors had attempted to rejuvenate the party's reputation by holding a series of press conferences that promised radical changes to national policies. Shortly before that day's official press conference, GDR's spokesman Günter Schabowski was handed a small note that confirmed all East Berliners were now allowed to cross the border into the West with the proper identification. However, without any other explanation to help him digest this news, Schabowski was thrust in front of a ravenous media. One garbled and mostly improvised statement later and it was official: the once impenetrable gates of East Germany were finally opening. The problem was, this news wasn't communicated down to the guards and officials

Images: Alamy

TIMELINE

19 August 1989

Prior to the Wall's physical collapse, the political landscape regarding it is already falling apart. The opening of Hungary's borders with Austria can be seen as the initial catalyst.

4 September

Following a similar influx of refugees into a now-open Czechoslovakia, a series of peaceful protests are organised across East Berlin.

18 October

East German leader Erick Honecker is forced to resign by his own party following his refusal to change the city's immigration policies.

4 November

With Erick Honecker and his 'shoot to kill' edict removed, the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 reaches its height. The chant, "We are the people!" echoes through the streets of East German cities.

9.30am 9 November

Crowds begin to gather all along the Berlin Wall as rumours of a policy change run amok.

1.00pm

The GDR holds a press conference where it announces all GDR citizens are permitted to cross over to West Berlin.

5.05pm

The first few East Berliners make their way into the West as guards quickly lose control of the situation.

8.00pm

Huge crowds gather at the Berlin Wall, hacking it to pieces as the media televises the scenes around the world.

22 December

Despite multiple breaches in the Wall, the Brandenburg Gate is officially opened for all Berliners to pass through.

3 October 1990

With the Wall itself almost completely demolished, East and West Germany are united in a formal ceremony. The US, British and French governments relinquish stewardship of West Berlin into the hands of a new united and democratic German government.

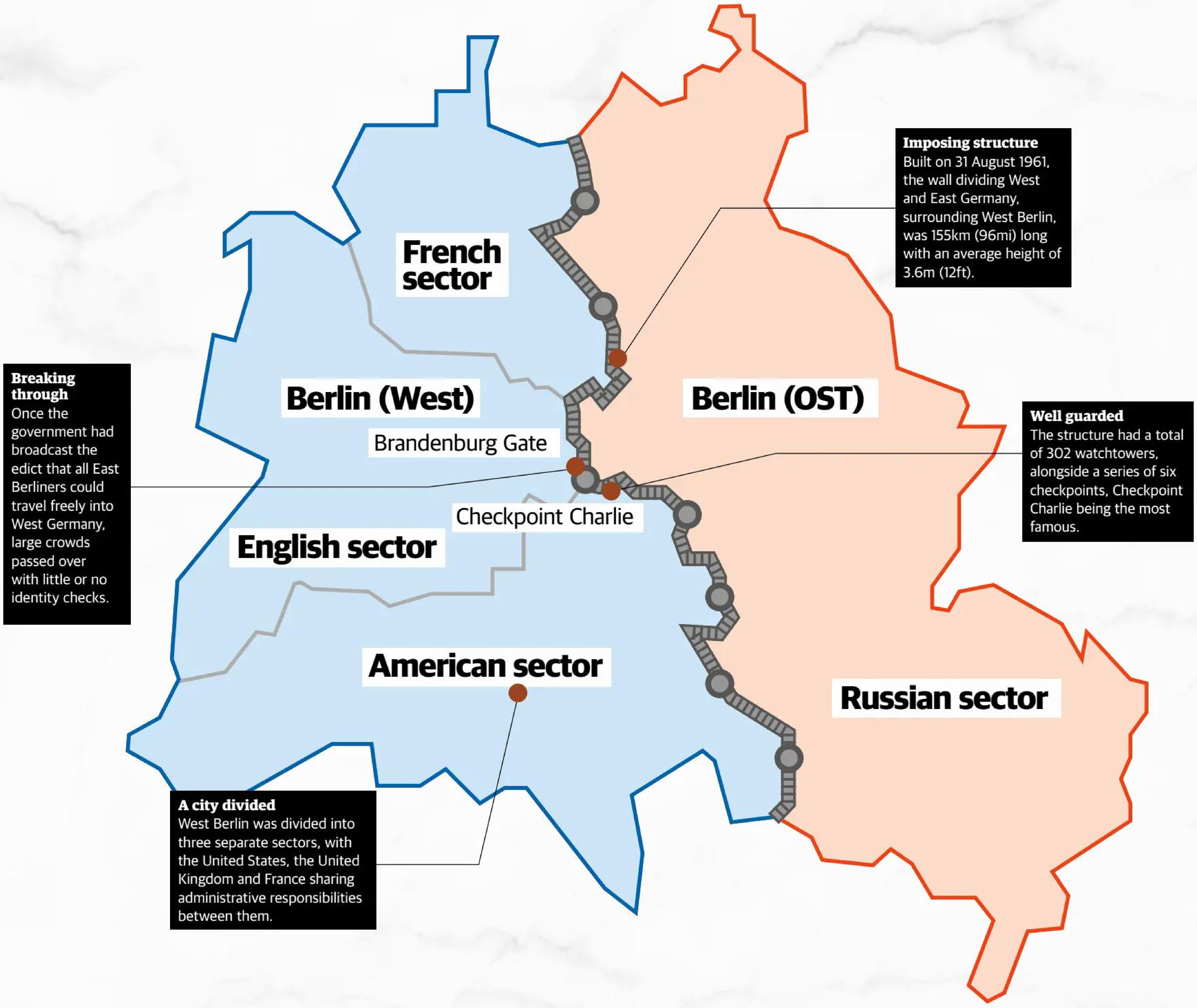
THIS IN THE NAME OF THE PEOPLE
WIR MACHEN

"From the edge of the Wall we watched everything, and when the East Germans began to tear down the wall, we joined them"

manning the many guard posts along the wall. With frustration building among the crowds of East Berliners, the situation was a powder keg waiting to explode.

As the news spread across East Berlin, hundreds of people began to gather at each checkpoint demanding to be let through into West Berlin. To Colombian-born Ramos, it was utter chaos, but it was chaos charged by hope rather than anger. "It was November and it was extremely cold that night, but in the excitement everyone was milling around in anticipation. Restaurants and bars, which by law were meant to close, were all open well into the early hours. Laws became meaningless that night," he recalls. "People came from all over Europe: we spoke in many languages. There were British, French, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks and many Scandinavians, plus, of course, the Germans. That night, Berlin was Europe. Remember; at the time, there were no cell phones, no video, no Twitter, no Facebook, no selfies, so remarkably, there aren't that many photos of that night. Today, of course, there would be billions of photos."

As Ramos and his friends approached the Wall itself, the air seemed alight with a mixture of confusion, frustration and apprehension. "As the news of the law changing spread it became a massive sense of relief, of 'it's over', of excitement. After decades of baseless promises from politicians and pointless dreams of uniting of families, it suddenly became possible in a delirious joy", he says. "Someone wrote it was the world's largest street party, and it was. 5 million people in one city. East Germans flooded across the borders and went visiting throughout all of Germany. The cities declared free bus and streetcar tickets for them, free museums and zoos, free everything for the visiting East Germans. It was an incredible time." The Wall was suddenly no longer the impenetrable barrier to another world. East Berliners were flooding into the other side of the city while others started attacking the wall with any tool they could find. The military looked on dumbfounded. Some of them even joined in the demolition job. "It was clear that both governments, East and West German, plus the US military, had lost control", comments Ramos. "They stood by helplessly, watching everyone bustle around. I talked with East German soldiers who told me their rifles were empty. No bullets. They looked forward to coming across the border. West German police, who are always so orderly and authoritative, just watched. They didn't know what to do; this had never been planned." He adds, "many of us pushed through the wall and went to the East Berlin side. It was mutual: West Germans and East Germans tore



Imposing structure
Built on 31 August 1961, the wall dividing West and East Germany, surrounding West Berlin, was 155km (96mi) long with an average height of 3.6m (12ft).

Breaking through
Once the government had broadcast the edict that all East Berliners could travel freely into West Germany, large crowds passed over with little or no identity checks.

Well guarded
The structure had a total of 302 watchtowers, alongside a series of six checkpoints, Checkpoint Charlie being the most famous.

A city divided
West Berlin was divided into three separate sectors, with the United States, the United Kingdom and France sharing administrative responsibilities between them.

down the wall together to unite themselves once more." Breaking down the wall itself was no easy task, but it became a cathartic coming together of a nation suddenly reunited in matter of hours. Citizens from East and West gathered on each side to start hacking away, pulling away chunks and lofting them on high, like mementos from a fun day out. Ramos was right in the middle of the crowds tearing into the wall that evening. "Opening the Wall went on for hours", he remarks. "It was made of thick slabs of concrete, nine or twelve feet (three or four metres) high. Small holes were made with hammers, but to open the wall so large numbers of people could pass, industrial machinery was needed. Somehow, West German construction companies showed up with jackhammers and cranes which broke apart the slabs and lifted them out of the way." In the following months, Germany was unified as a single, free nation for the first time since the final shots of the Second World War and Europe - and the world - was changed forever. Germany would go on to become an economic superpower, but that chilly evening in Berlin has remained an iconic image of social and political upheaval. "It was one of the most astonishing events of my life. It was 25 years ago and I still remember so many moments, especially the mood", recalls Ramos on that historic day.

"The fall of the Berlin Wall ended a chapter of European history reaching back more than a hundred years. However, it also opened a new chapter, and so far, we don't yet know what it's going to be or where it's going to lead."

ORIGINS & AFTERMATH

At the end of World War II in 1945, Germany was split into four zones, each administered by one of the main Allied forces. Berlin was divided in two, with East Berlin absorbed into the increasing Soviet grip on Eastern Europe. In 1961, the semi-autonomous communist government the German Democratic Republic - under direction from the Kremlin - decreed that a new wall would be erected to physically divide the city in two, effectively cutting East Berliners off from the rest of the world. For 28 years, the Berlin Wall signified a city evolving in two very different directions. When the first East Berlin citizens passed the guard patrols into free West Berlin, it was the start of the breaking up of the Eastern Bloc and the first steps toward a unified Germany that would see it become one of the most robust economic powers in Europe.

Images: Alamy

A UNITED STATES OF EUROPE?

We look back over the many attempts to bring the continent of Europe together under one rule

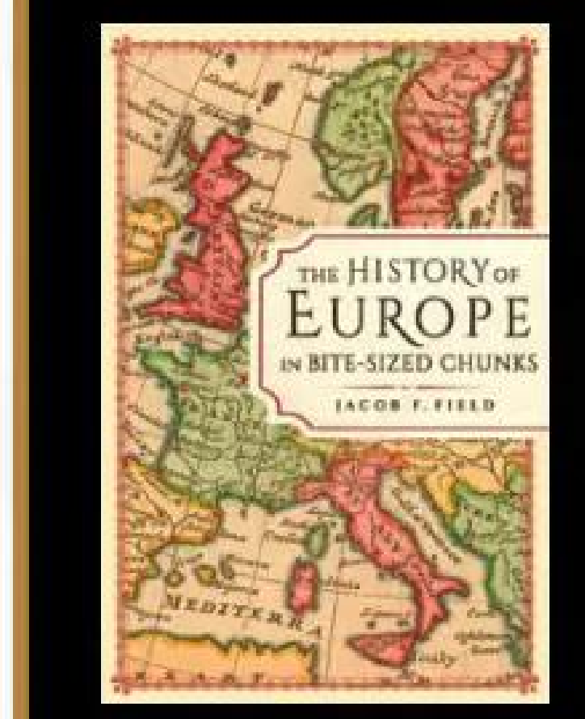
Written by Jonathan Gordon

The concept of European cooperation and interdependency didn't start with the formation of the European Union. Its origins date back many hundreds of years to the earliest empires, and their influence continued to be felt right up to the modern era. Through the many attempts to bring the continent together, mostly through conquest and imperial ambition, we see many different ideas of what it means to bring Europe under one rule, whether it should have shared laws, shared controls, shared language and culture.

In the following pages we talk with Cambridge research associate and history author Jacob F Field about six key examples of European unity through history, what they took from each other, how they interpreted the vision of the united Europe and how they left their mark on what would come down the line.

EXPERT BIO

Jacob F Field



A research associate at the University of Cambridge, with a PHD in history from the University of Newcastle, Field has also written a number of popular history books, including One Bloody Thing After Another, looking at the gory history of the world, D-Day In Numbers, on the facts and figures behind Operation Overlord, and We Shall Fight On The Beaches, about the most inspirational speeches in history. His latest book, The History Of Europe In Bite-sized Chunks, is available from 7 March.

THE ROMAN EMPIRE *(27 BCE – 395 CE)*

The model for so much to come

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🗡

When we talk about a singular vision for the continent of Europe all roads appear to lead back to Rome. While there were empires that preceded it, so much of how Rome managed its immense empire resonated for hundreds of years longer in each territory it touched. It had a wide-ranging set of policies that not only controlled Europe, but helped to define it as a region that could have common goals and authority. "The Holy Roman Empire makes its name from it. Titles like Tsar and Kaiser come from Caesar. Everyone is looking to Rome," Field tells us. So if so much of what follows is an attempt to emulate or live up to Roman Europe, what did it aspire to? "I think at least at first it was about security," Field explains. "The fact that you're based in the Mediterranean means that you have so many other rivals and it's so important to have control of the whole basin. I think once Rome did that and started expanding, it kind of becomes like a shark that has to keep on moving forward to guarantee its security and its prosperity."

What followed was a pretty multifaceted approach to building and controlling a unified continent, not just through direct rule from Rome through imposing local governors, but also by spreading its culture, laws and economics. Roads helped to tie the continent together and encourage trade among the regions, a unified tax code made sure everyone paid their share and the introduction of Roman baths and wine are examples of the spread of culture too. "Rome is the most ambitious attempt to try and not just bring together Europe politically and try to dominate someone, but to try and bring them into this system and way of thinking, even on a cultural level," says Field.

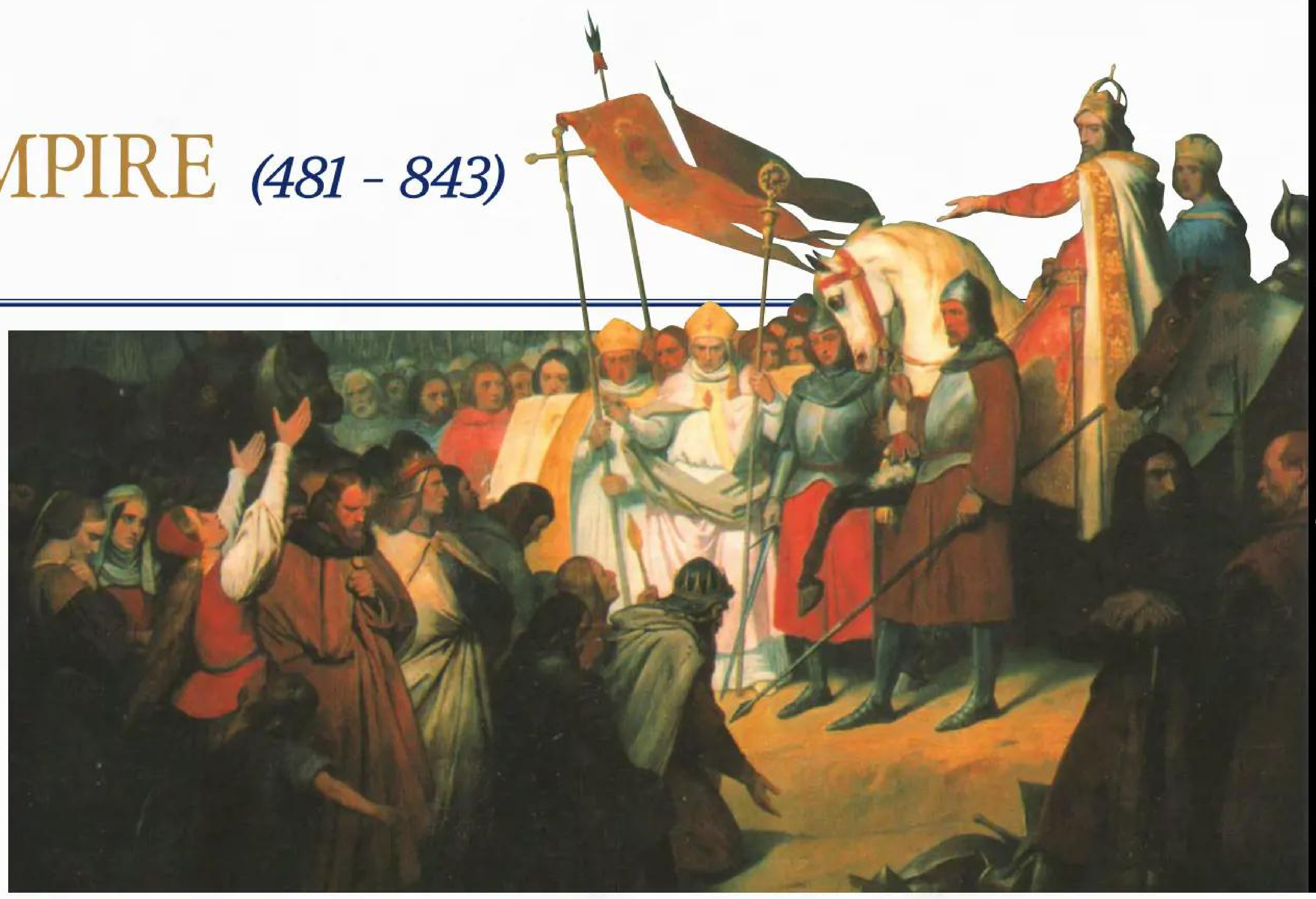
And there was the central Roman army, which not only gave the empire the teeth with which to defend and enforce its laws, but also gave non-Roman citizens a path to citizenship and equality within the empire. "In some ways I think that the Roman army makes it even more an ambitious policy than the EU. It was a central army and it was a rather democratic way for anyone to become a Roman citizen, buying into the system. If you weren't a Roman citizen you could join for 25 years and at the end of your service you become as much a Roman as someone born in Italy. In a way it's the army that, although it's a strength, in a sense leads to its downfall and makes Rome much more unstable later on, when you have people in the provinces being more loyal to their legion commander than the emperor in Rome. That's when things begin to get problematic, in the West at least."

Key

€ *– Single currency*
👥 *– Representation*
☒ *– Democratic rights*
⚖ *– Legal system*
✥ *– Freedom of movement*
🤝 *– Free trade*
% *– Central taxation*
🗡 *– Central military*

THE FRANKISH EMPIRE *(481 – 843)*

Charlemagne's great experiment



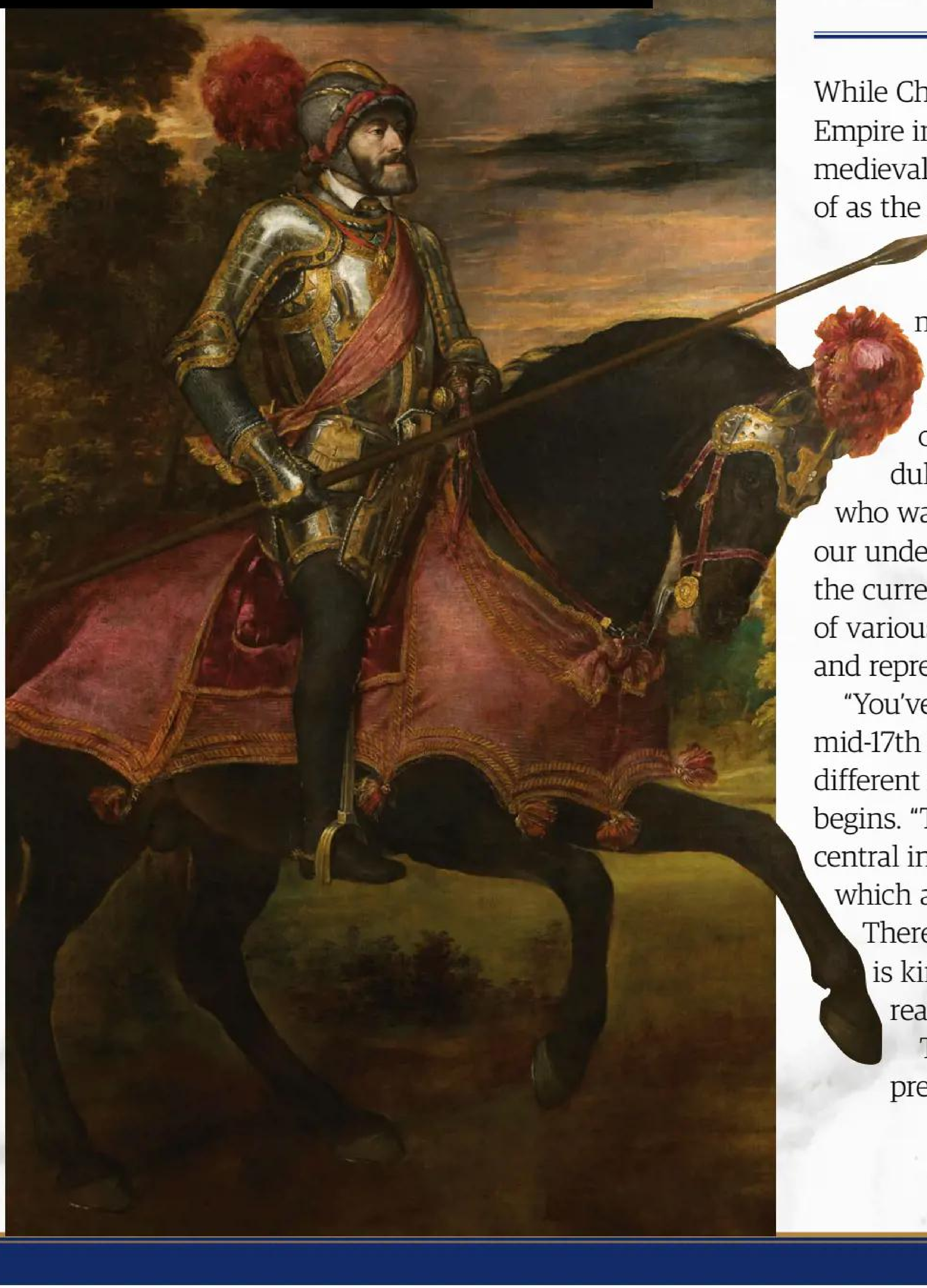
While the Kingdom of Francia stood for many hundreds of years the eye is naturally drawn to the rule of Charlemagne and the Carolingian Empire phase of its history. This is where a unified vision for the continent takes shape and a centralised series of policies seeks to bring order to Europe as a whole. "Charlemagne codifies the laws and he sends out envoys to the provinces, like inspectors, to make sure the laws are being followed and sent along," Field tells us. "Charlemagne isn't just someone who said 'the laws should be this'. He's actually trying to enforce them and that's another way you can compare it to the EU. The EU is pretty stringent about making EU regulations and laws are followed. Because of modern technology they're more successful than Charlemagne, but they are still trying to have the same end goal of this centralised set of laws and breaking down local barriers and so on."

Counts were put in charge of provinces and each was given several legal experts, called scabini, to maintain a consistent interpretation of the law. These counts were in turn in charge of levying soldiers for Charlemagne's army, collecting tolls and maintaining infrastructure. In addition there was an annual meeting of all the important men of the empire to discuss issues affecting the realm, offering a degree of representation for each province. It doesn't quite hold together though, as the post-Roman world, particularly in Western Europe, is still very fragmented and issues such as inheritance caused Charlemagne's achievements to be pulled apart. "One of the problems of Francia is that you have this inbuilt rivalry between the heirs who are jockeying for seniority, jockeying for position, so after Charlemagne dies you have this quite long period of instability and civil war between his sons, which is only solved by the Treaty of Verdun in 843, when they formally decide to split the empire into three.

"It's only really under Charlemagne, who was this incredibly charismatic and energetic leader, where we can compare the Frankish realms to something like the Roman Empire, because really it's a very short period that you have this sense of imperial unity," Field explains. "Also this was an incredibly violent process. Charlemagne was constantly at war and had to use violence and coercion to bring people under his rule and convert them to Christianity."

THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE *(962 – 1806)*

Rule in devolved form



While Charlemagne took the title of Holy Roman Empire in his time, it is really more the late-medieval and early modern period that we think of as the height of the empire and where it is closest to holding a unified Europe together. That said, it's also one of the most decentralised instances of such a project prior to the European Union itself with each state (there were 300 of them by 1648) run by its own king, duke or count reporting in to the emperor, who was himself elected. Importantly for our understanding of the progression towards the current model, it poked around the edges of various unified forms of policy-making and representation.

"You've got the Imperial Diet, which from the mid-17th century is a permanent forum for the different member states to discuss things," Field begins. "They can't set laws, but it is a kind of central institution. You've got the imperial circles, which are local and regional court systems. There's an imperial central court, which is kind of like the EU court, but is really, really slow."

There were other things that were not present in terms of the kind of central control the original Roman Empire offered, such as a centralised currency. The thaler was seemingly an attempt at this but really only used for helping to value other currencies already in use around the empire. There was also no standing army for the emperor. One could be called, but that relied on local leaders supporting the emperor and heeding the call.

And then there's the dual power of the Pope that causes even more issues: "You have the occasional crises, particularly in the later medieval period where there's a rivalry between the emperor and the Pope. There's a tension about who appoints bishops and so on; the investiture crisis."

Continuous conflict between the states, often around religion, ending with the 30 Years War, finally comes to an end with the Peace of Westphalia, but this only confirms what was already known about the empire by this time, according to Field. "The components of the Holy Roman Empire were essentially sovereign states that just happened to be a part of this wider organisation. But really, after 1648, the power of the empire is existing in name only and the Habsburgs become much more focused on Austria and central Europe."

NAPOLEONIC EMPIRE *(1804 – 1814)*

A model for modern laws

Napoleon really put the final nail in the coffin of the Holy Roman Empire, seeking to topple the feudal remnants of the old systems of monarchy and replace them with something equally autocratic, but with greater equality before the law. Again this was a short-lived period of a united Europe under a single, iconic leader, but it left us with a lot of big influential ideas that resonate to this day. "He said himself that his great triumph was not his military victories but the Code Napoléon, his civil legal system, which swept away a lot of old-fashioned laws, which were often contradictory and had a lot of regional aspects," explains Field. "It essentially set forward things like equality before the law, it ended a lot of aristocratic privilege. A legalised right to divorce. Freedom of religion whether it was Christians, Jews, Catholics and Protestants and so on. You've got centralised courts."

And while he ultimately wanted himself as the sole ruler of the empire he was building, he still practiced the meritocracy he was preaching as part of the post-revolutionary wave he was riding, as the make up of his army proves. "If you look at his marshals, a lot of them started as corporals or privates and worked their way up the army. Although, from a British perspective we could look at Napoleon sometimes quite negatively, certainly his way of ruling had a lot of modern aspects to it."

In some ways his conflict with Britain and the embargo he tried to enforce against trading with Britain was part of what weakened the project as a whole. "In some parts of the empire this was just not going to work. Places like Portugal and Spain trade so much with Britain, it's really bad for the economy. It was very unpopular in the Low Countries, but in places like Switzerland it encourages local manufacturing there because they didn't have to compete with the British. His institutions weren't strong enough to hold this embargo against British trade for very long. And again, this wasn't a kind of thought through economic policy. This was his political and military response to his ongoing rivalry with Britain."

Still, the legal changes he introduced made a big difference across the continent. "In terms of long-term impact the Napoleonic Code still has a lot of echoes in systems of law and civil law that are in place," Field tells us. "Countries that were part of the Napoleonic system after the early 19th century keep much better records, because he introduces civil registration."

> **"I wished to found a European system, a European Code of Laws, a European judiciary: there would be but one people in Europe."**
>
> – **Napoleon Bonaparte**, ***Writing from exile in St Helena, 1815-21***

THE NAZI REICH *(1933 – 1945)*

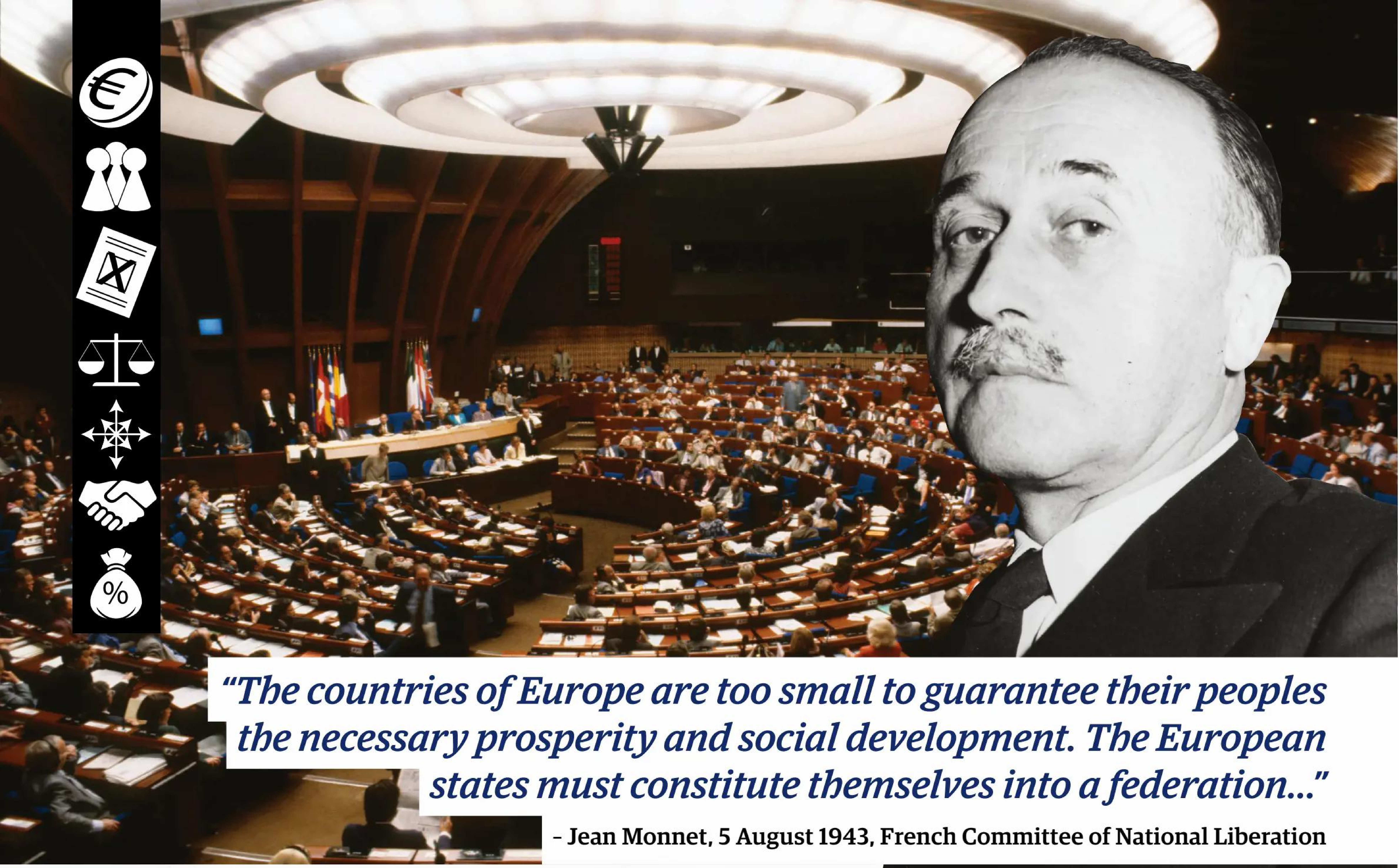
The opposite of union

The calls for Europe to come together under a single banner had been building, particularly after the Napoleonic Wars, increasing more still after the Great War, but the vision of Hitler and the Nazi Party was very different from what most had been dreaming of, even if it drew many of its influences from the Roman Empire, much like those that came before them. In a complete flip from the civil code of Napoleon, the Nazi Reich looked to establish a massive cultural shift in Europe with a racially driven division of society. "As an attempt to remodel and restructure society this was an empire with very wide-ranging ambitions. You've got this official policy where you create this hierarchy of races from the Nordic Aryans at the top and going forth to the Untermenschen. You're got a set educational policy and even a set leisure policy with things like Strength Through Joy. You've got a set culture; the radio and cinema were really important to the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi policy," concludes Field.

As World War II began a series of military states and puppet governments were set up to control the empire, enforcing law, collecting taxes and conscripting troops (according to the racial ranking system). But even in its name it was constantly calling back to the past, the Third Reich being the third empire following the Holy Roman and Germanic. "They were kind of magpie-like in taking elements from Pagan culture and Viking culture. Especially to people like Himmler, that was very important to him. Another thing is that economically you've got the currency of the Reichsmark and what they would do is set official exchange rates with client states, which were very beneficial with the Reichsmark. They even had a set rate with the pound sterling when they occupied the Channel Islands."

In this way everything feeds back into Germany rather than any kind of pan-European cooperation. There is no representation, no negotiation or compromise to be had here, even with those who were ideologically similar to their outlook. "The deal with Mussolini was he could have Italy and parts of the Mediterranean and parts of Africa, but only in so far as they are subservient and secondary to the needs of the Germanic people. It was very much an unequal Europe they were trying to create."

> *"We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes, which make life worth living."*
>
> **– Winston Churchill, 19 September 1946, University of Zurich**



> *“The countries of Europe are too small to guarantee their peoples the necessary prosperity and social development. The European states must constitute themselves into a federation…”*
>
> **– Jean Monnet, 5 August 1943, French Committee of National Liberation**

THE EUROPEAN UNION *(1958 – Present)*

A path to peace

The formation of the current European Union was something that started slowly and gradually gathered pace faster and faster in the years that followed. Beginning with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, followed by the European Economic Community in 1957, there was a recognition that economic interdependency and alliance would help to bring to an end the decades and centuries of conflict in Europe. “You’re joining together countries through a common set of economic policies,” says Field. “I think free trade really is at the heart of the European experiment in my view and one of the reasons why in one sense it’s been incredibly successful in that there’s never been a war between EU member states and the EU is the only one of these empires where there hasn’t been internal disorder, open violence between member states and areas of it.”

Given that this all begins with economic cooperation, oversight naturally grows to be a massive part of the equation and the European Union is formed of six nations to begin with, gradually expanding to the current 28 countries. The model perhaps closest to that of Rome, according to Field. “I think for the first time since Rome you have incredibly strong centralised institutions, the European Courts, the European Parliament,” he tells us. “In another sense these institutions are at least nominally democratic. We elect the European Parliament technically speaking. The bureaucrats and civil servants that work for the EU are accountable to democratic institutions.”

As it stands member states elect MEPs to a lower chamber of the European Parliament with ministers from each country making up the upper house. There’s central control of a lot of decision-making and law-making, but it’s agreed by the collective. Also, unlike other empires, there’s no cultural imposition being made. “It’s not a situation where everyone is going to speak French or Esperanto or whatever.

Things like freedom of religion are part of the bedrock of the EU, so in a sense these common freedoms are really important. In terms of creating a European culture, it hasn’t really done that because it’s impossible really. Culture is so defuse. You can’t set a European religion. In that sense it’s not as ambitious as something like the Roman Empire or the Third Reich, which are trying to change culture and society from the top down.”

The introduction of a central currency in the Euro has shown some of the fault lines in some of the EU’s centralised approach, however. “Europe has the European Central Bank, which is setting a country’s financial policies centrally, which is one of the problems that sprang up, because the EU has some very rich and advanced countries like Germany and France and then some countries that, although rich in historical and geographical terms, compared to France and Germany, places like Greece and Portugal are struggling. It’s very difficult to create a coherent economic policy that fits all countries who have adopted the Euro. That’s one of the problems with this kind of centralised mechanism. The EU is seven per cent of the world’s population and about a quarter of its GDP, so it’s incredibly ambitious to think you can tie all of these diffuse countries together.”

And while there’s often talk of a European Army, there are many impediments to that emerging according to Field, with the EU more likely to rely on common security planning and the exchange of intelligence in the near future. “The idea of giving up your country’s own armed forces, most people respond to that in a fairly negative way. Even if you’re friendly to the concept and idea of further European integration, I think that’s a step that a lot of people and states would be unwilling to make, particularly some of the newer members and the former Balkans. Croats might not be so keen on having their army as part of the same organisation that Serbia and Kosovo are part of. We’re a pretty long way off an EU Army.”

ICONIC LANDMARKS OF EUROPE

Discover some of the greatest achievements of Europe's unique architectural history

Written by Mark Dolan

One human desire seems to transcend culture, time and geography: the desire to build monuments. From the earthen long barrows of the Neolithic to the skyscrapers of the modern day, people have always sought to put their mark on the landscape. They can memorialise great achievements or commemorate terrible events, and are often inspired by religious devotion or born from mundane activities. What unites all the landmarks in this list is that they are uniquely inspiring, impressive or important, and have often become some of the most visited locations in Europe.

STONEHENGE

The Neolithic wonder

Amesbury, Wiltshire, England

The oldest landmark on this list, but one that continues to amaze and inspire to this day, Stonehenge is situated in the Wiltshire countryside, where it has stood for around 4,500 years. Five hundred years before the famous standing stones were erected, a circular bank and ditch monument was created, inside which the stones were later placed. Although Stonehenge gave its name to similar earthwork monuments – henges, which consist of a ditch surrounded by a bank, Stonehenge's ditch is on the outside, meaning that technically, it's not a henge at all. The stone circle at the site is formed of two kinds of stone, the larger local sarsens, and smaller bluestones, which were quarried in the Preseli Hills, Wales, over 241 kilometres (150 miles) away. The monument has remained enigmatic and enchanting to people for thousands of years, though when Cecil Chubb, the monument's last private owner, bought it as a present for his wife in 1915, she was less impressed, having asked him to just buy some curtains.

Stonehenge, possibly the world's most recognisable prehistoric structure

The Colosseum at sunrise

THE COLOSSEUM

The home of gladiators

Rome, Italy

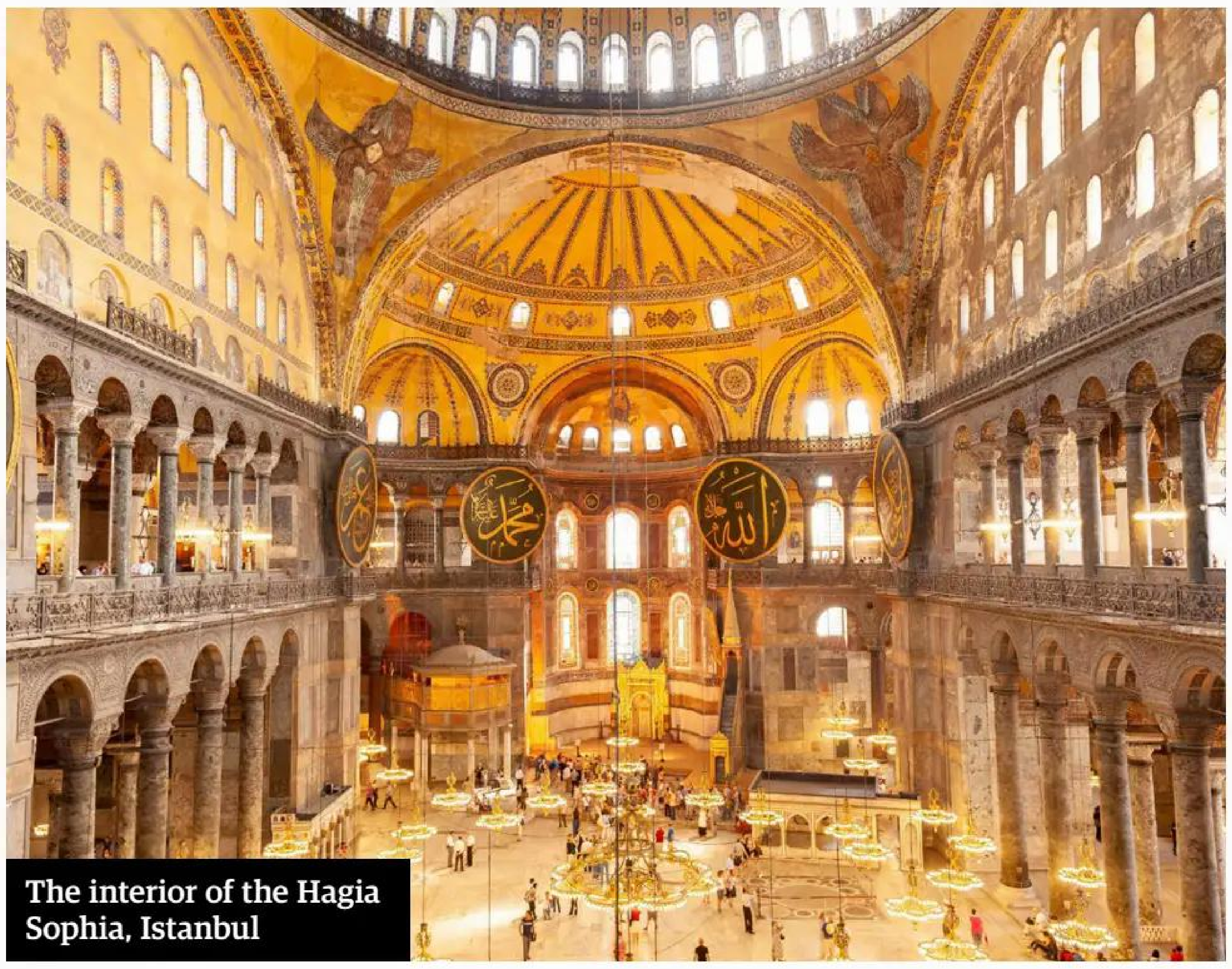
In the centre of the Eternal City is found the imposing spectre of the Colosseum, the world's most famous Roman amphitheatre. Construction began on the arena in 70-72 CE, under the direction of Emperor Vespasian, and it was officially opened in 80 CE with 100 days of games by his son Titus. The final construction was then overseen by Titus' younger brother Domitian (the three rulers comprising the Flavian Dynasty). Vespasian came to power one year and three emperors after the end of Nero's turbulent reign and quickly began to restore political stability to the Roman Empire, and the Colosseum – or the Flavian Amphitheatre – was his gift to the people of Rome, a place for entertainment and a statement of his power. The arena saw constant use for around 400 years, until, in 404 Emperor Honorius abolished the gladiatorial games, leading to a period of disuse. In the Middle Ages, the Colosseum was robbed of stone to construct buildings including St Peter's Basilica and the Palazzo Venetia. By the 18th century, though, its beauty and importance were recognised, and it was saved from further destruction and eventually restored to its former glory.

HAGIA SOPHIA

Dome, Sweet Dome

Istanbul, Turkey

The Hagia Sophia that you can go and see today is actually the third iteration of the building. First constructed in the 4th century by Emperor Constantius, son of Constantine, the founder of Constantinople, as the city's cathedral, but, having a wooden roof, it twice burned down during riots. After the second destruction, Emperor Justinian I rebuilt it, and this structure, which stands today, was inaugurated in 537. The church's main wonder is the architectural genius of the domes, crafted by the engineer Isidore of Miletus and mathematician Anthemius of Tralles. Their design meant that the domes could be suspended in place without visible supports that would break up the airy atmosphere of the interior. The walls and ceiling were decorated at great expense, with coloured marble and stone inlays as well as gold decoration on the inside of the dome. Although originally there were no figurative mosaics, due to the Iconoclasm of the period, since the 9th century, numerous such images have adorned its walls.



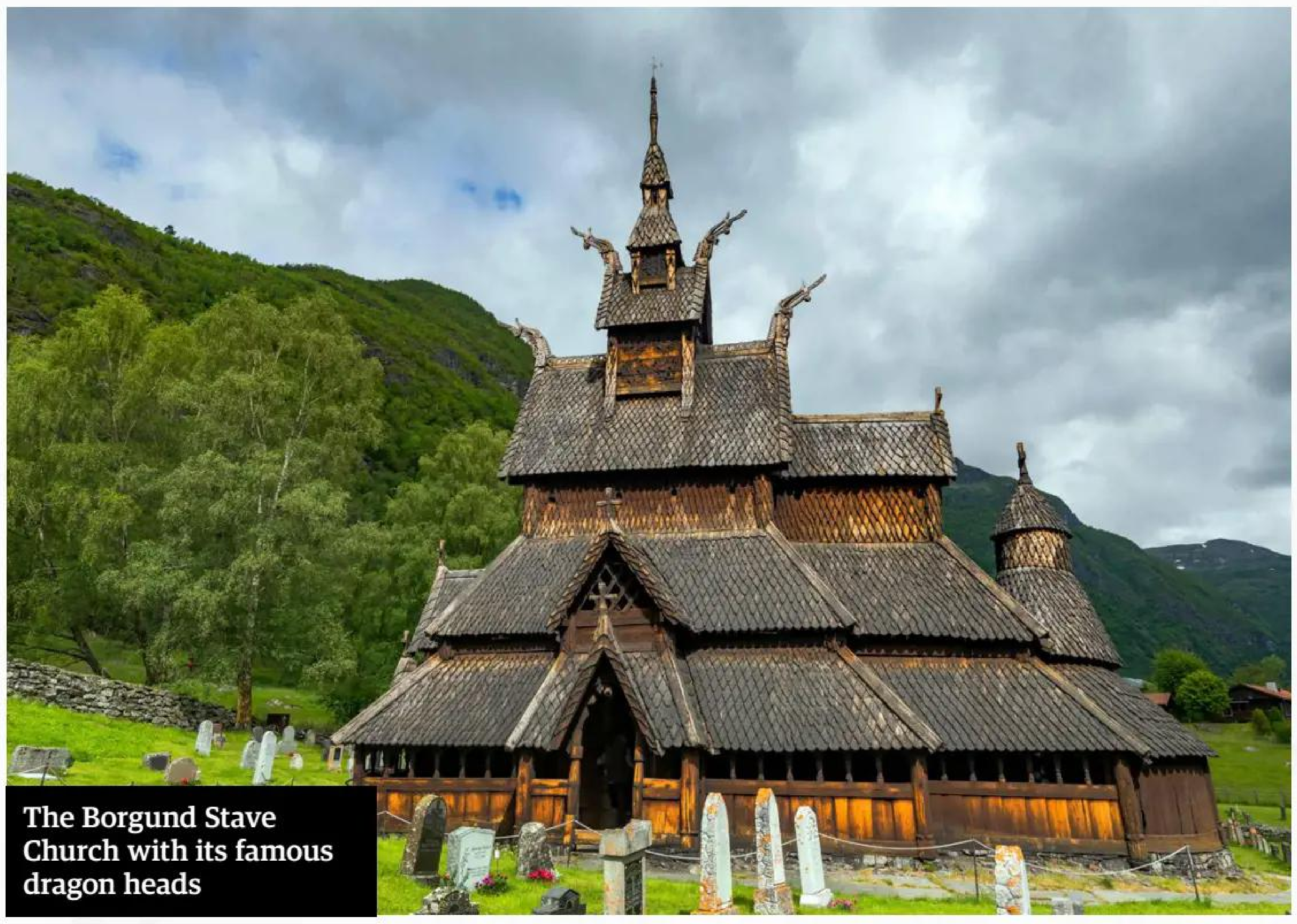
The interior of the Hagia Sophia, Istanbul

BORGUND STAVE CHURCH

A fusion of old and new religion

Borgund, Lærdal, Norway

Stave churches don't seem like they were built to last. Constructed entirely out of wood, they were a style unique to Northern Europe and while there were once over 1,000 of them in Norway, today just 28 remain. The grandest and most beautiful of all is the Borgund Stave Church. Built in 1180, the church stands out against its verdant background with its tarred wood, distinctive architecture and intricate carved decoration. One of the most fascinating aspects of the church is the historical context of its creation. At this time, Christianity was taking hold across Scandinavia, but many people still believed in the Old Gods. As a result, Borgund has details of both Christian imagery and the designs and iconography of the Old Norse gods – it even features carved dragon heads looking out over the landscape.



The Borgund Stave Church with its famous dragon heads

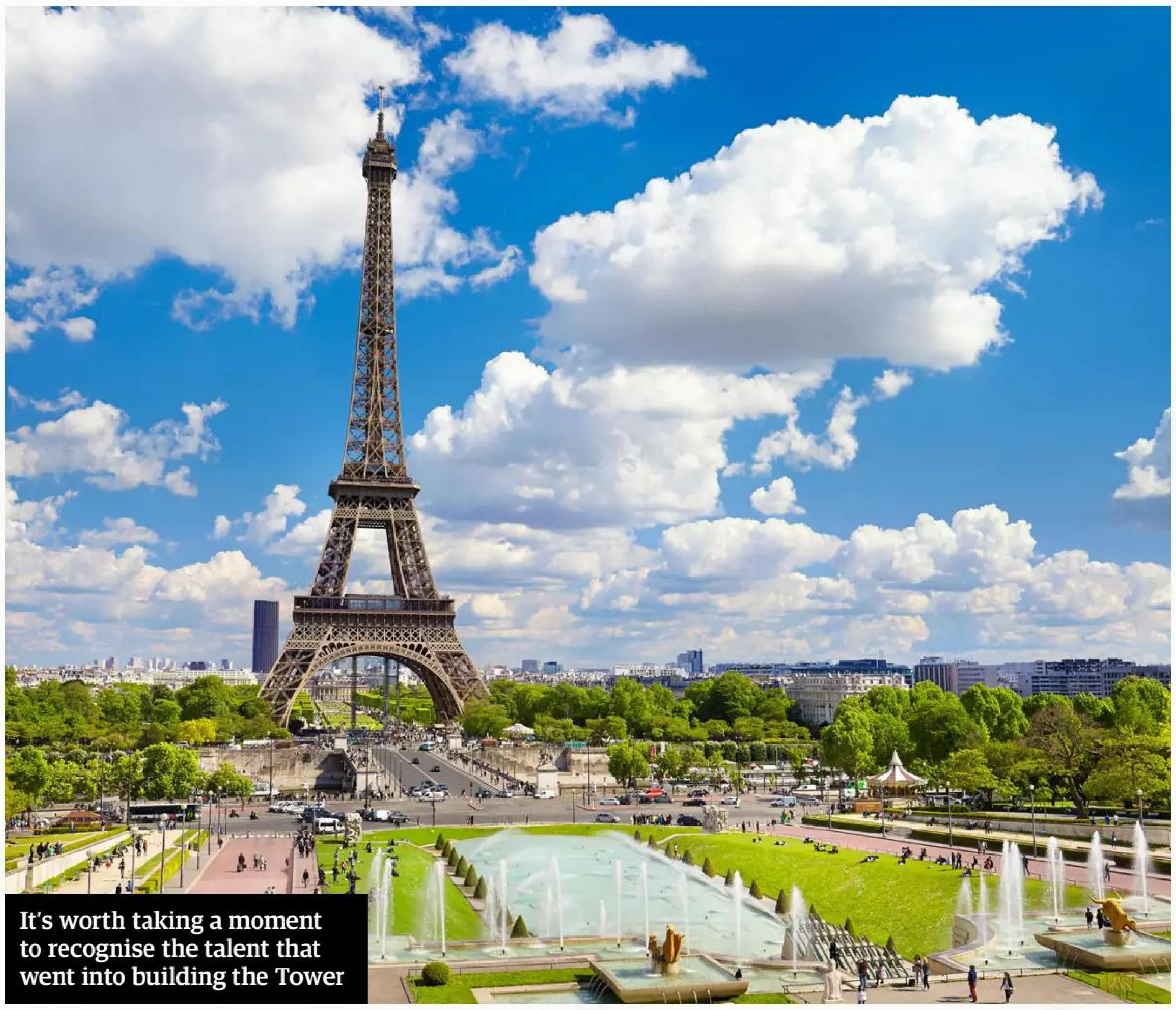
Images: Alamy

THE EIFFEL TOWER

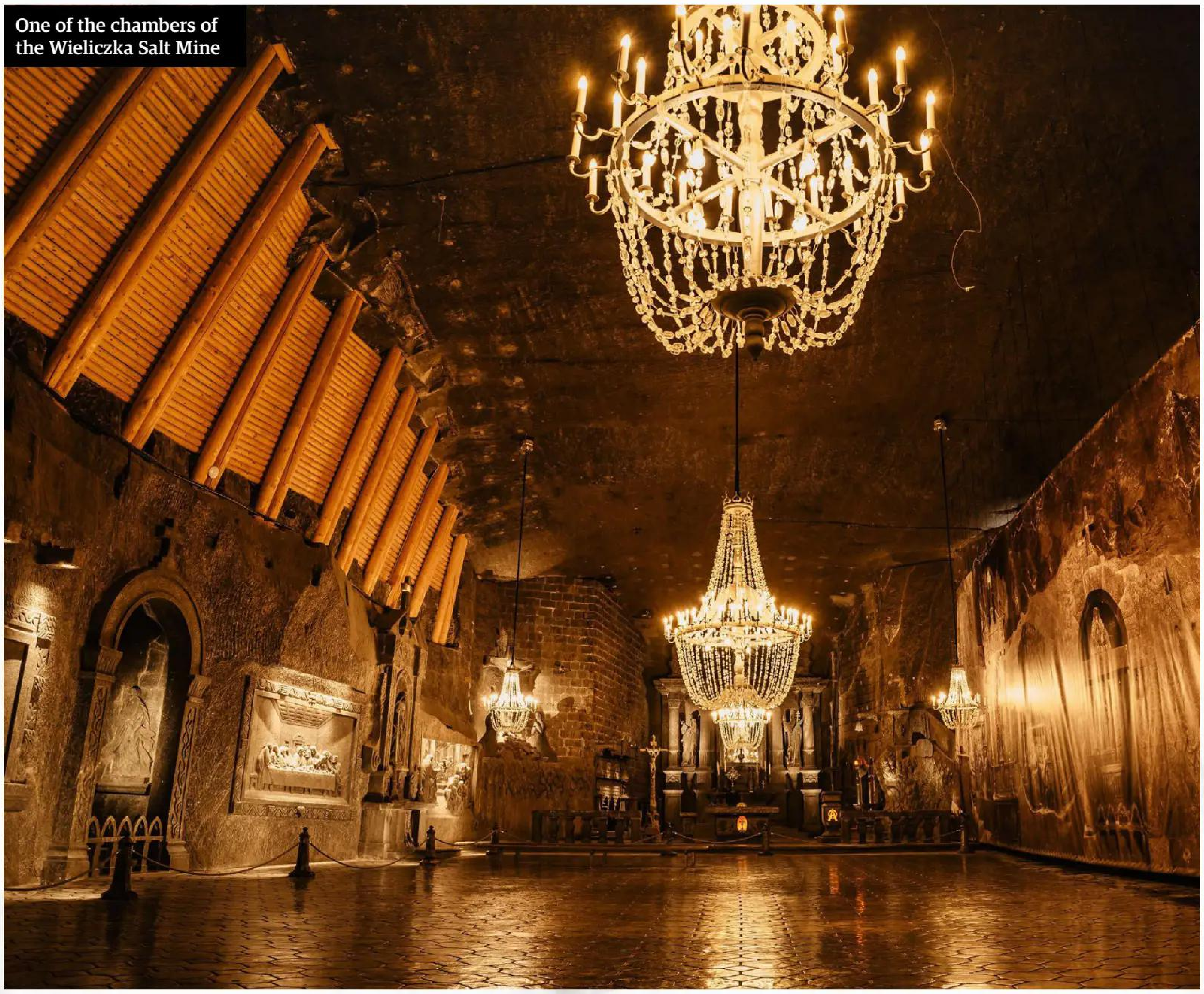
The iron lady

Paris, France

Today, the Eiffel Tower is one of Europe's most instantly recognisable landmarks, looming romantically over the city's residents and visitors. In 1886, as part of the leadup to the 1889 Paris Exposition (Exposition Universelle), a competition was established inviting entries for the design of a monument to be the grand entrance to the fair. Of 107 entries, the plan of Eiffel et Compagnie, Gustave Eiffel's architectural firm, was selected. Though Eiffel owned the company and gave his name to the tower, the original idea actually came from two of his colleagues, Maurice Koechlin and Emile Nouguier. The three architects finalised the plans for their 300-metre high (984 foot) iron latticework tower, which would be composed of 18,000 individual pieces of iron, all made at Eiffel's workshop, and 2.5 million rivets. The technological wonder was unveiled in 1889, the centenary of the French Revolution and met with almost universal acclaim, though some people were less impressed; the novelist Léon Bloy, for instance, called it a "truly tragic street lamp". Unfortunately for Bloy, the tower has remained significantly more popular than his books.



It's worth taking a moment to recognise the talent that went into building the Tower



One of the chambers of the Wieliczka Salt Mine

WIELICZKA SALT MINE

The underground chapel

Wieliczka, Krakow, Poland

Unlike the rest of the landmarks in this list, the Wieliczka Salt Mine was excavated rather than constructed. The potential of the mine was accidentally discovered in the 13th century, when valuable rock salt was found during the digging of a well. The mine quickly gained fame, and had a famous visitor in the form of the polymath Nicolaus Copernicus. There is now a statue of him carved out of the mine's rock salt. Alongside the bust of Copernicus, the mine has dozens of chambers that have been intricately carved into ornate chapels, featuring columns, altars and even a rock salt chandelier. So beautiful are the mine's chambers, that they're now often used as wedding venues.

BELÉM TOWER

A Manueline marvel

Lisbon, Portugal

In the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal emerged as one of Europe's foremost powers, leading the Age of Exploration and establishing a wealthy and expansive colonial empire. The heart of Portugal's empire was Lisbon, where Belém Tower stands to this day as one of the greatest architectural achievements of the country's most prosperous era. In the late 15th century, King João II wanted to protect the city from naval attack via the Tagus River, and founded two fortresses, Cascais and São Sebastião da Caparica to protect it. Belém Tower was added to this to act as an outpost and gateway to the city by his successor, Manuel I. Manuel's reign saw the development of a distinctive architectural movement named for the King, the Manueline style, which drew heavily on Moorish architecture. Belém Tower was constructed between 1515 and 1521 and is regarded as a Manueline masterpiece, epitomising the glory and influences of the Portuguese Renaissance.

Belem Tower, Lisbon

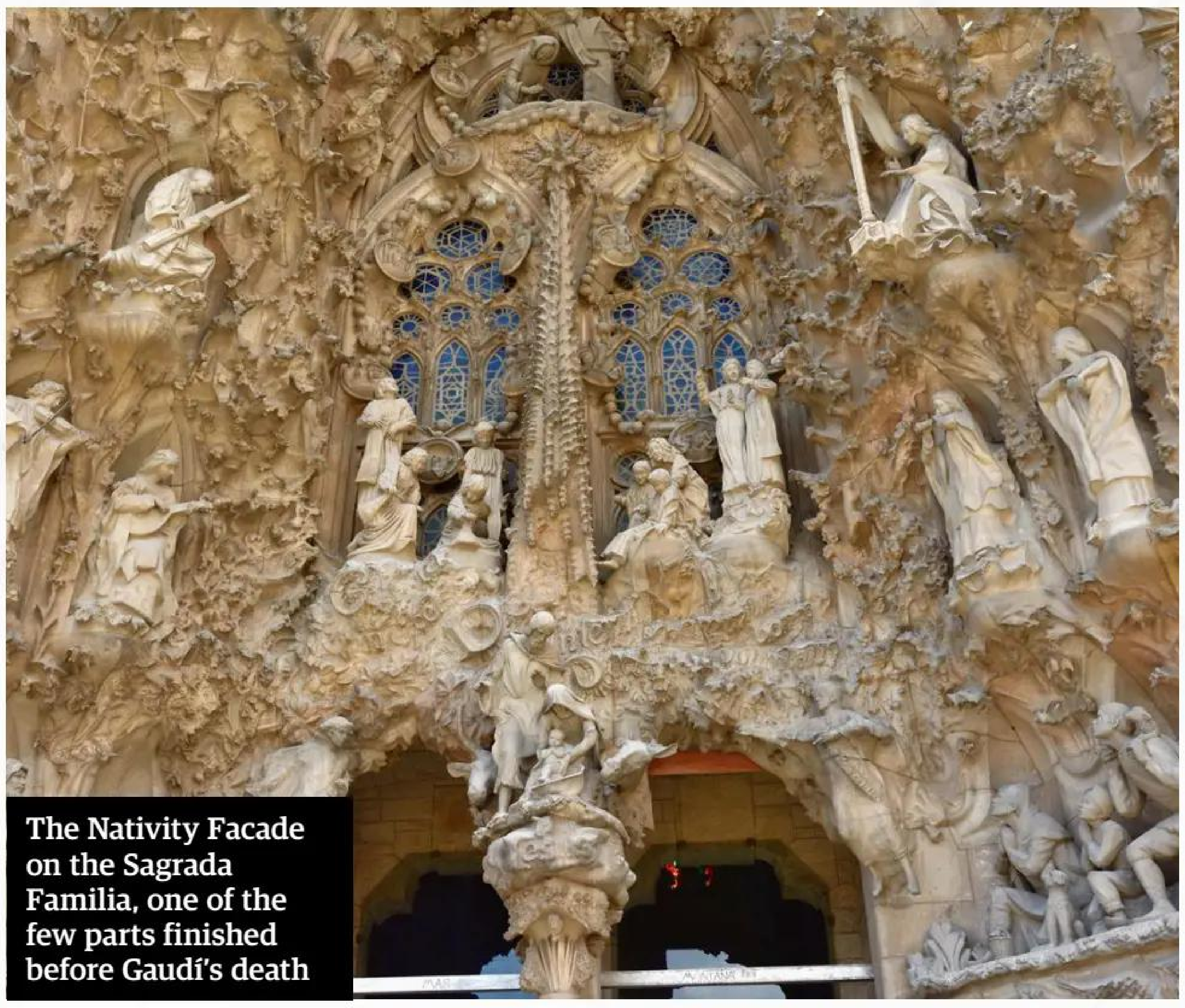
SCHÖNBRUNN PALACE

The home of the Habsburgs

Vienna, Austria

It's not easy to stand out in a city with the cultural heritage of Vienna, yet the Schönbrunn Palace manages it with aplomb. The former residence for the Habsburg Dynasty, the estate of Schönbrunn came into Habsburg hands in 1569 through Maximilian II, but the current palace wasn't constructed until the end of the 17th century, when Leopold I commissioned Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, an architect trained in Rome, to build a new palace on the land. The palace was continually expanded and improved by a series of Habsburgs, until it came into the hands of Charles VI, who used the estate only for shooting pheasants. He gifted it to his daughter, Maria Theresa, who loved the palace and its gardens. Maria Theresa made the palace the Imperial residence and subsequently the heart of political and court life in Vienna. She continually improved and elaborated the palace right up until her death in 1780. It is her adoration of the palace and lifelong dedication to it that raised it to the grandeur and status that it still enjoys today.

Schönbrunn Palace and its gardens


The Nativity Facade on the Sagrada Familia, one of the few parts finished before Gaudí's death

LA SAGRADA FAMILIA

An unfinished World Heritage Site

Barcelona, Spain

Barcelona's modernist masterpiece, the Sagrada Familia, has the unique distinction on this list of remaining unfinished, despite having been begun over 140 years ago. The church was initially designed to be a relatively unremarkable Neo-Gothic cathedral, but when the architect Antoni Gaudí was handed the reigns, he had something very different in mind. Gaudí, an innovative and hugely ambitious architect, took on the project in 1883, but continued to work on other buildings until 1914, after which he dedicated all his time and attention to the church for the final 12 years of his life. When Gaudí died in 1926, just the Nativity Facade, one bell tower, the apse and the crypt were finished, which is convenient, as Gaudí was buried in the crypt. Work on the tower has continued ever since – interrupted by the Spanish Civil War and more recently, COVID-19 – and still follows Gaudí's original designs.

Images: Alamy

HISTORY OF EUROPE

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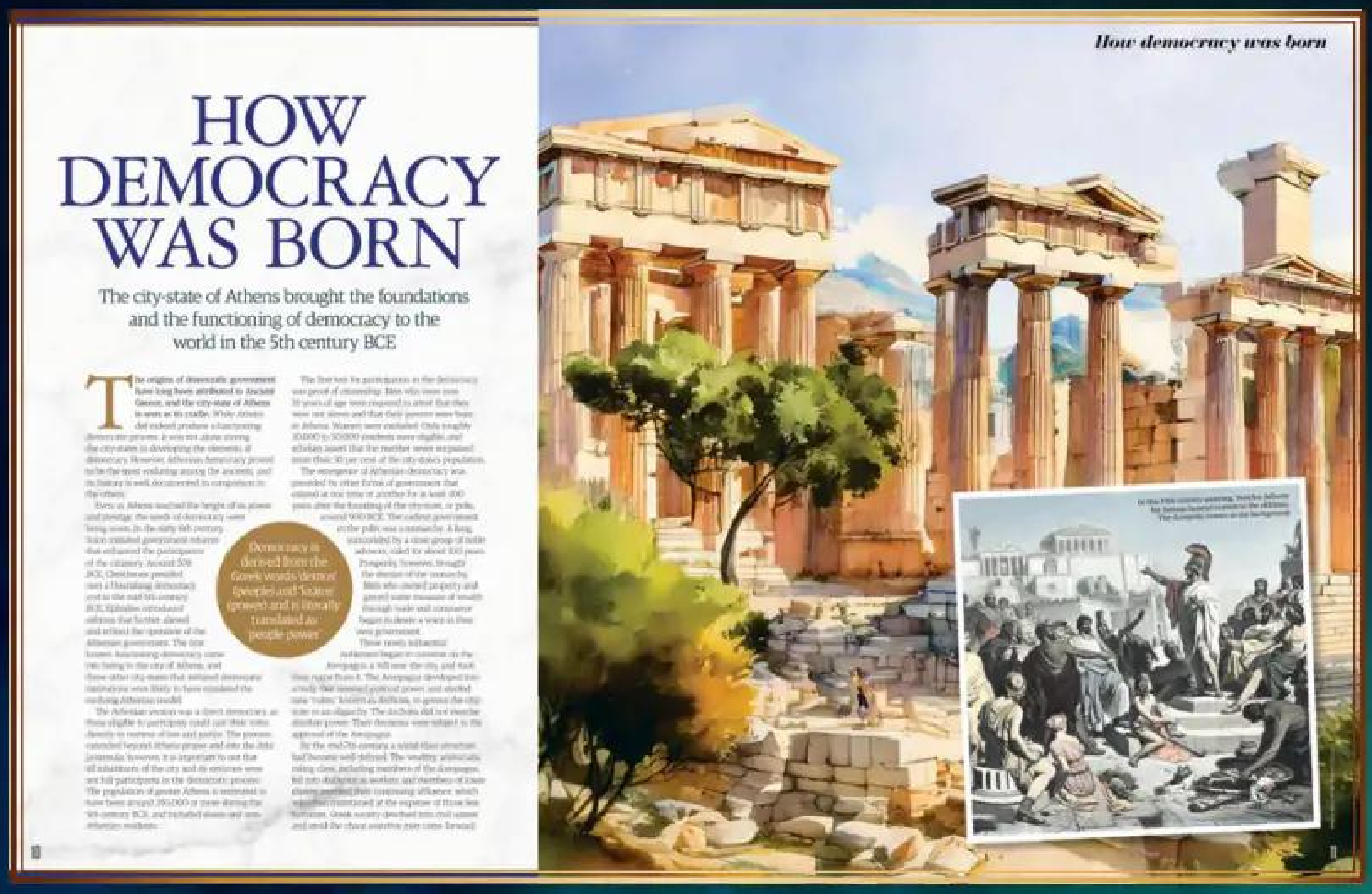


How democracy was born

HOW DEMOCRACY WAS BORN

The city-state of Athens brought the foundations and the functioning of democracy to the world in the 5th century BCE

The Protestant Reformation

c.1517-1648

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

In the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation successfully challenged the might of Rome

ANCIENT ORIGINS

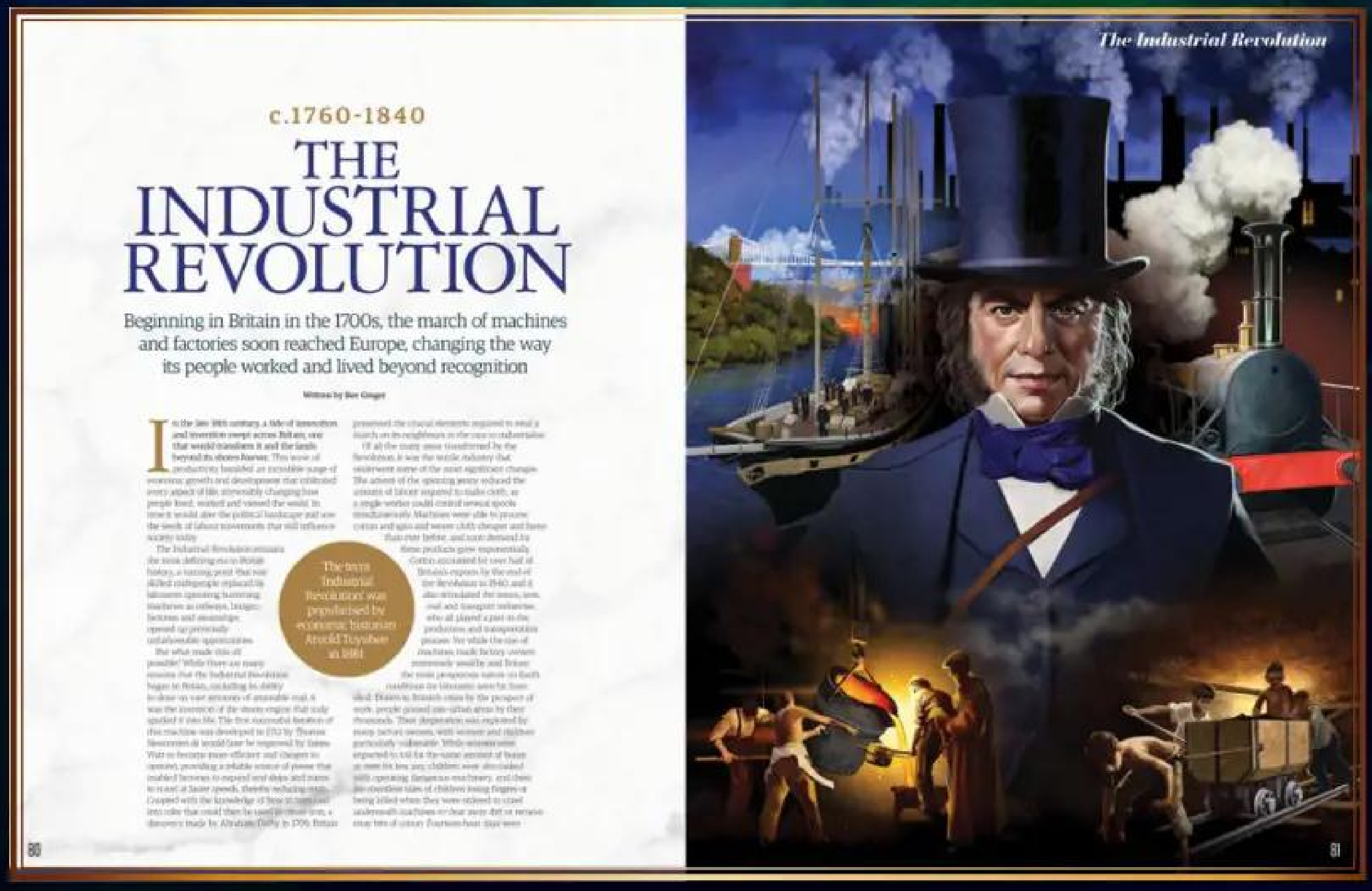
UNCOVER THE CIVILISATIONS THAT SHAPED MODERN EUROPE

THE REFORMATION

HOW RELIGIOUS UPHEAVAL USHERED IN A NEW ERA

HISTORY OF EUROPE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE TRIUMPHS AND STRUGGLES THAT SHAPED A CONTINENT

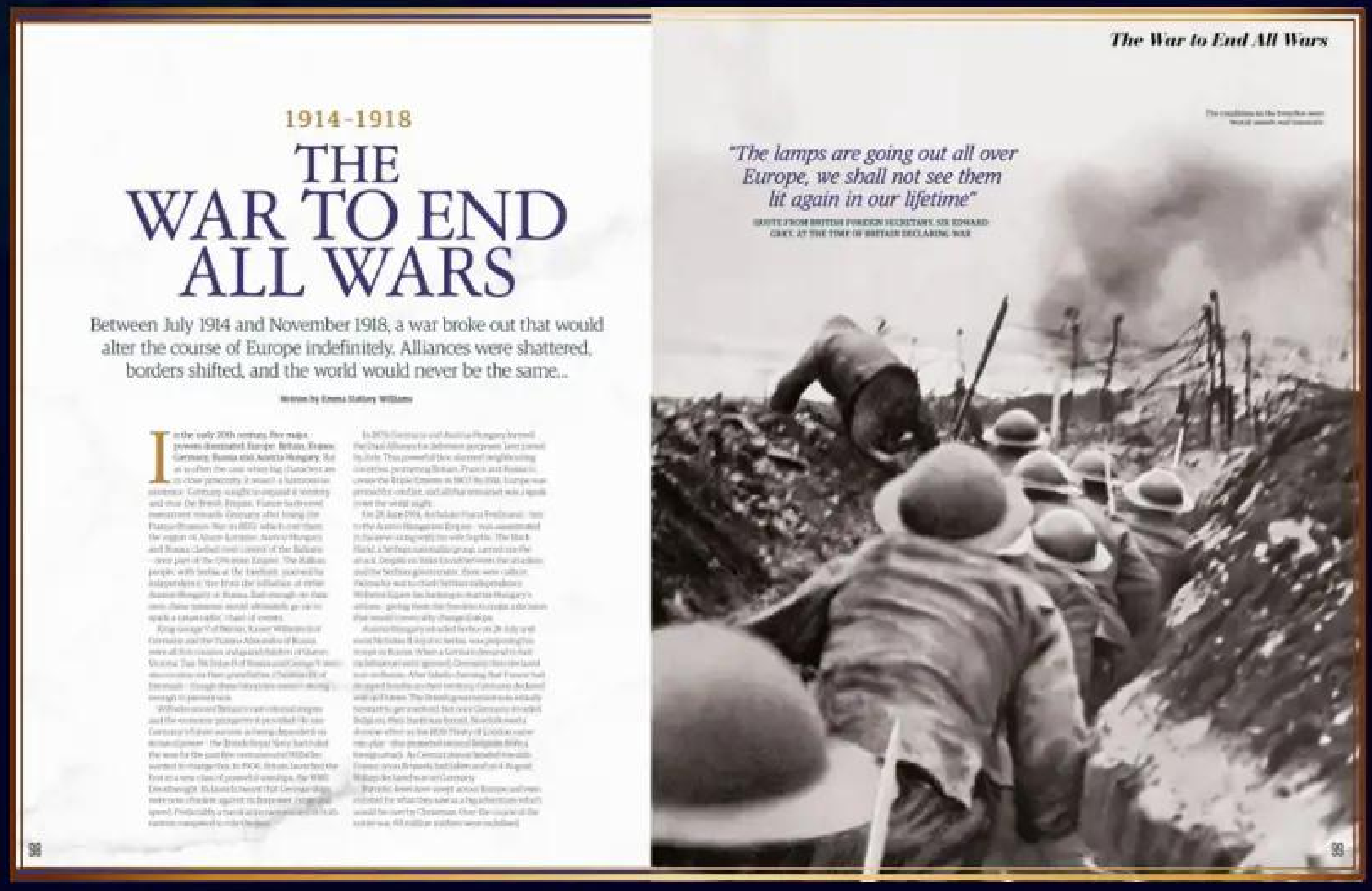


The Industrial Revolution

c.1760-1840

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Beginning in Britain in the 1700s, the march of machines and factories soon reached Europe, changing the way its people worked and lived beyond recognition



The War to End All Wars

1914-1918

THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

Between July 1914 and November 1918, a war broke out that would alter the course of Europe indefinitely. Alliances were shattered, borders shifted, and the world would never be the same...

"The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime"

ART & TECHNOLOGY

INSIDE THE INNOVATIONS THAT CHANGED THE WAY WE LIVE

EUROPE IN CHAOS

EXPLORE DEVASTATING CONFLICTS FROM REVOLUTIONS TO WARS

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